

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

No. 474.]

SATURDAY, MAY 23, 1869.

[PRICE 2d.]

THE MOONSTONE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE WOMAN IN WHITE," &c. &c.

SECOND PERIOD. THE DISCOVERY OF THE TRUTH. (1848—1849.)

SECOND NARRATIVE.

THE NARRATIVE OF MR. BRUFF.

CHAPTER III.

THE prominent personage among the guests at the dinner party I found to be Mr. Murthwaite.

On his appearance in England, after his wanderings, society had been greatly interested in the traveller, as a man who had passed through many dangerous adventures, and who had escaped to tell the tale. He had now announced his intention of returning to the scene of his exploits, and of penetrating into regions left still unexplored. This magnificent indifference to presuming on his luck, and to placing his safety in peril for the second time, revived the flagging interest of the worshippers in the hero. The law of chances was clearly against his escaping on this occasion. It is not every day that we can meet an eminent person at dinner, and feel that there is a reasonable prospect of the news of his murder being the news that we hear of him next.

When the gentlemen were left by themselves in the dining-room, I found myself sitting next to Mr. Murthwaite. The guests present being all English, it is needless to say that, as soon as the wholesome check exercised by the presence of the ladies was removed, the conversation turned on politics as a necessary result.

In respect to this all-absorbing national topic, I happen to be one of the most un-English Englishmen living. As a general rule, political talk appears to me to be of all talk the most dreary and the most profitless. Glancing at Mr. Murthwaite, when the bottles had made their first round of the table, I found that he was apparently of my way of thinking. He was doing it very dexterously—with all possible consideration for the feelings of his host—but it is not the less certain that he was composing himself for a nap. It struck me as an experiment worth attempting, to try whether a judicious allusion to the subject of the Moonstone would keep him awake, and, if it did, to

see what *he* thought of the last new complication in the Indian conspiracy, as revealed in the prosaic precincts of my office.

"If I am not mistaken, Mr. Murthwaite," I began, "you were acquainted with the late Lady Verinder, and you took some interest in the strange succession of events which ended in the loss of the Moonstone?"

The eminent traveller did me the honour of waking up in an instant, and asking me who I was.

I informed him of my professional connexion with the Hernecastle family, not forgetting the curious position which I had occupied towards the Colonel and his Diamond in the bygone time.

Mr. Murthwaite shifted round in his chair, so as to put the rest of the company behind him (Conservatives and Liberals alike), and concentrated his whole attention on plain Mr. Bruff, of Gray's Inn Square.

"Have you heard anything, lately, of the Indians?" he asked.

"I have every reason to believe," I answered, "that one of them had an interview with me, in my office, yesterday."

Mr. Murthwaite was not an easy man to astonish; but that last answer of mine completely staggered him. I described what had happened to Mr. Luker, and what had happened to myself, exactly as I have described it here. "It is clear that the Indian's parting inquiry had an object," I added. "Why should he be so anxious to know the time at which a borrower of money is usually privileged to pay the money back?"

"Is it possible that you don't see his motive, Mr. Bruff?"

"I am ashamed of my stupidity, Mr. Murthwaite—but I certainly don't see it."

The great traveller became quite interested in sounding the immense vacuity of my dulness to its lowest depths.

"Let me ask you one question," he said. "In what position does the conspiracy to seize the Moonstone now stand?"

"I can't say," I answered. "The Indian plot is a mystery to me."

"The Indian plot, Mr. Bruff, can only be a mystery to you, because you have never seriously examined it. Shall we run it over together, from the time when you drew Colonel Hernecastle's Will, to the time when the Indian called

at your office? In your position, it may be of very serious importance to the interests of Miss Verinder, that you should be able to take a clear view of this matter in case of need. Tell me, bearing that in mind, whether you will penetrate the Indian's motive for yourself? or whether you wish me to save you the trouble of making any inquiry into it?"

It is needless to say that I thoroughly appreciated the practical purpose which I now saw that he had in view, and that the first of the two alternatives was the alternative I chose.

"Very good," said Mr. Murthwaite. "We will take the question of the ages of the three Indians first. I can testify that they all look much about the same age—and you can decide for yourself, whether the man whom you saw was, or was not, in the prime of life. Not forty, you think? My idea too. We will say not forty. Now look back to the time when Colonel Herncastle came to England, and when you were concerned in the plan he adopted to preserve his life. I don't want you to count the years. I will only say, it is clear that these present Indians, at their age, must be the successors of three other Indians (high caste Brahmins all of them, Mr. Bruff, when they left their native country!) who followed the Colonel to these shores. Very well. These present men of ours have succeeded to the men who were here before them. If they had only done that, the matter would not have been worth inquiring into. But they have done more. They have succeeded to the organisation which their predecessors established in this country. Don't start! The organisation is a very trumpety affair, according to our ideas, I have no doubt. I should reckon it up as including the command of money; the services, when needed, of that shady sort of Englishman, who lives in the byeways of foreign life in London; and, lastly, the secret sympathy of such few men of their own country and (formerly, at least) of their own religion, as happen to be employed in ministering to some of the multitudinous wants of this great city. Nothing very formidable, as you see! But worth notice at starting, because we may find occasion to refer to this modest little Indian organisation as we go on. Having now cleared the ground, I am going to ask you a question; and I expect your experience to answer it. What was the event which gave the Indians their first chance of seizing the Diamond?"

I understood the allusion to my experience.

"The first chance they got," I replied, "was clearly offered to them by Colonel Herncastle's death. They would be aware of his death, I suppose, as a matter of course?"

"As a matter of course. And his death, as you say, gave them their first chance. Up to that time the Moonstone was safe in the strong room of the bank. You drew the Colonel's Will leaving his jewel to his niece; and the Will was proved in the usual way. As a lawyer, you can be at no loss to know what course the Indians would take (under English advice) after that."

"They would provide themselves with a copy of the Will from Doctors' Commons," I said.

"Exactly. One or other of those shady Englishmen to whom I have alluded, would get them the copy you have described. That copy would inform them that the Moonstone was bequeathed to the daughter of Lady Verinder, and that Mr. Blake the elder, or some person appointed by him, was to place it in her hands. You will agree with me that the necessary information about persons in the position of Lady Verinder and Mr. Blake, would be perfectly easy information to obtain. The one difficulty for the Indians would be to decide, whether they should make their attempt on the Diamond when it was in course of removal from the keeping of the bank, or whether they should wait until it was taken down to Yorkshire to Lady Verinder's house. The second way would be manifestly the safest way—and there you have the explanation of the appearance of the Indians at Frizinghall, disguised as jugglers, and waiting their time. In London, it is needless to say, they had their organisation at their disposal to keep them informed of events. Two men would do it. One to follow anybody who went from Mr. Blake's house to the bank. And one to treat the lower men-servants with beer, and to hear the news of the house. These common-place precautions would readily inform them that Mr. Franklin Blake had been to the bank, and that Mr. Franklin Blake was the only person in the house who was going to visit Lady Verinder. What actually followed upon that discovery, you remember, no doubt, quite as correctly as I do."

I remembered that Franklin Blake had detected one of the spies, in the street—that he had, in consequence, advanced the time of his arrival in Yorkshire by some hours—and that (thanks to old Betteredge's excellent advice) he had lodged the Diamond in the bank at Frizinghall, before the Indians were so much as prepared to see him in the neighbourhood. All perfectly clear so far. But, the Indians being ignorant of the precaution thus taken, how was it that they had made no attempt on Lady Verinder's house (in which they must have supposed the Diamond to be) through the whole of the interval that elapsed before Rachel's birthday?

In putting this difficulty to Mr. Murthwaite, I thought it right to add that I had heard of the little boy, and the drop of ink, and the rest of it, and that any explanation based on the theory of clairvoyance was an explanation which would carry no conviction whatever with it, to my mind.

"Nor to mine either," said Mr. Murthwaite.

"The clairvoyance in this case is simply a development of the romantic side of the Indian character. It would be a refreshment and an encouragement to those men—quite inconceivable, I grant you, to the English mind—to surround their wearisome and perilous errand in this country with a certain halo of the marvellous and the supernatural. Their boy is

unquestionably a sensitive subject to the mesmeric influence—and, under that influence, he has no doubt reflected what was already in the mind of the person mesmerising him. I have tested the theory of clairvoyance—and I have never found the manifestations get beyond that point. The Indians don't investigate the matter in this way; the Indians look upon their boy as a Seer of things invisible to their eyes—and, I repeat, in that marvel they find the source of a new interest in the purpose that unites them. I only notice this as offering a curious view of human character, which must be quite new to you. We have nothing whatever to do with clairvoyance, or with mesmerism, or with anything else that is hard of belief to a practical man, in the inquiry that we are now pursuing. My object in following the Indian plot, step by step, is to trace results back, by rational means, to natural causes. Have I succeeded to your satisfaction, so far?"

"Not a doubt of it, Mr. Murthwaite! I am waiting, however, with some anxiety, to hear the rational explanation of the difficulty which I have just had the honour of submitting to you."

Mr. Murthwaite smiled. "It's the easiest difficulty to deal with of all," he said. "Permit me to begin by admitting your statement of the case as a perfectly correct one. The Indians were undoubtedly not aware of what Mr. Franklin Blake had done with the Diamond—for we find them making their first mistake, on the first night of Mr. Blake's arrival at his aunt's house."

"Their first mistake?" I repeated.

"Certainly! The mistake of allowing themselves to be surprised, lurking about the terrace at night, by Gabriel Betteredge. However, they had the merit of seeing for themselves that they had taken a false step—for, as you say, again, with plenty of time at their disposal, they never came near the house for weeks afterwards."

"Why, Mr. Murthwaite? That's what I want to know! Why?"

"Because no Indian, Mr. Bruff, ever runs an unnecessary risk. The clause you drew in Colonel Herncastle's Will, informed them (didn't it?) that the Moonstone was to pass absolutely into Miss Verinder's possession on her birthday. Very well. Tell me which was the safest course for men in their position? To make their attempt on the Diamond while it was under the control of Mr. Franklin Blake, who had shown already that he could suspect and outwit them? Or to wait till the Diamond was at the disposal of a young girl, who would innocently delight in wearing the magnificent jewel at every possible opportunity? Perhaps you want a proof that my theory is correct? Take the conduct of the Indians themselves as the proof. They appeared at the house, after waiting all those weeks, on Miss Verinder's birthday; and they were rewarded for the patient accuracy of their calculations by seeing the Moonstone in the bosom of her dress! When I heard the story of the Colonel and the Diamond, later in the evening,

I felt so sure about the risk Mr. Franklin Blake had run (they would have certainly attacked him, if he had not happened to ride back to Lady Verinder's in the company of other people); and I was so strongly convinced of the worse risks still, in store for Miss Verinder, that I recommended following the Colonel's plan, and destroying the identity of the gem by having it cut into separate stones. How its extraordinary disappearance, that night, made my advice useless, and utterly defeated the Hindoo plot—and how all further action on the part of the Indians was paralysed the next day by their confinement in prison as rogues and vagabonds—you know as well as I do. The first act in the conspiracy closes there. Before we go on to the second, may I ask whether I have met your difficulty, with an explanation which is satisfactory to the mind of a practical man?"

It was impossible to deny that he had met my difficulty fairly; thanks to his superior knowledge of the Indian character—and thanks to his not having had hundreds of other Wills to think of since Colonel Herncastle's time!

"So far, so good," resumed Mr. Murthwaite. "The first chance the Indians had of seizing the Diamond was a chance lost, on the day when they were committed to the prison at Frizinghall. When did the second chance offer itself? The second chance offered itself—as I am in a condition to prove—while they were still in confinement."

He took out his pocket-book, and opened it at a particular leaf, before he went on.

"I was staying," he resumed, "with some friends at Frizinghall, at the time. A day or two before the Indians were set free (on a Monday, I think), the governor of the prison came to me with a letter. It had been left for the Indians by one Mrs. Macann, of whom they had hired the lodging in which they lived; and it had been delivered at Mrs. Macann's door, in ordinary course of post, on the previous morning. The prison authorities had noticed that the post-mark was 'Lambeth,' and that the address on the outside, though expressed in correct English, was, in form, oddly at variance with the customary method of directing a letter. On opening it, they had found the contents to be written in a foreign language, which they rightly guessed at as Hindustani. Their object in coming to me was, of course, to have the letter translated to them. I took a copy in my pocket-book of the original, and of my translation—and there they are at your service."

He handed me the open pocket-book. The address on the letter was the first thing copied. It was all written in one paragraph, without any attempt at punctuation, thus: "To the three Indian men living with the lady called Macann at Frizinghall in Yorkshire." The Hindoo characters followed; and the English translation appeared at the end, expressed in these mysterious words:

"In the name of the Regent of the Night,

whose seat is on the Antelope, whose arms embrace the four corners of the earth.

"Brothers, turn your faces to the south, and come to me in the street of many noises, which leads down to the muddy river.

"The reason is this.

"My own eyes have seen it."

There the letter ended, without either date or signature. I handed it back to Mr. Murthwaite, and owned that this curious specimen of Hindoo correspondence rather puzzled me.

"I can explain the first sentence to you," he said; "and the conduct of the Indians themselves will explain the rest. The god of the moon is represented, in the Hindoo mythology, as a four-armed deity, seated on an antelope; and one of his titles is the regent of the night. Here, then, to begin with, is something which looks suspiciously like an indirect reference to the Moonstone. Now, let us see what the Indians did, after the prison authorities had allowed them to receive their letter. On the very day when they were set free they went at once to the railway station, and took their places in the first train that started for London. We all thought it a pity at Frizinghall that their proceedings were not privately watched. But, after Lady Verinder had dismissed the police officer, and had stopped all further inquiry into the loss of the Diamond, no one else could presume to stir in the matter. The Indians were free to go to London, and to London they went. What was the next news we heard of them, Mr. Bruff?"

"They were annoying Mr. Luker," I answered, "by loitering about his house at Lambeth."

"Did you read the report of Mr. Luker's application to the magistrate?"

"Yes."

"In the course of his statement he referred, if you remember, to a foreign workman in his employment, whom he had just dismissed on suspicion of attempted theft, and whom he also distrusted as possibly acting in collusion with the Indians who had annoyed him. The inference is pretty plain, Mr. Bruff, as to who wrote that letter which puzzled you just now, and as to which of Mr. Luker's Oriental treasures the workman had attempted to steal."

The inference (as I hastened to acknowledge) was too plain to need being pointed out. I had never doubted that the Moonstone had found its way into Mr. Luker's hands, at the time to which Mr. Murthwaite alluded. My only question had been, How had the Indians discovered the circumstance? This question (the most difficult to deal with of all, as I had thought) had now received its answer, like the rest. Lawyer as I was, I began to feel that I might trust Mr. Murthwaite to lead me blindfold through the last windings of the labyrinth, along which he had guided me thus far. I paid him the compliment of telling him this, and found my little concession very graciously received.

"You shall give me a piece of information in

your turn before we go on," he said. "Somebody must have taken the Moonstone from Yorkshire to London. And somebody must have raised money on it, or it would never have been in Mr. Luker's possession. Has there been any discovery made of who that person was?"

"None that I know of."

"There was a story (was there not?) about Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite. I am told he is an eminent philanthropist—which is decidedly against him, to begin with."

I heartily agreed in this with Mr. Murthwaite. At the same time, I felt bound to inform him (without, it is needless to say, mentioning Miss Verinder's name) that Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite had been cleared of all suspicion, on evidence which I could answer for as entirely beyond dispute.

"Very well," said Mr. Murthwaite, quietly, "let us leave it to time to clear the matter up. In the meanwhile, Mr. Bruff, we must get back again to the Indians, on your account. Their journey to London simply ended in their becoming the victims of another defeat. The loss of their second chance of seizing the Diamond is mainly attributable, as I think, to the cunning and foresight of Mr. Luker—who doesn't stand at the top of the prosperous and ancient profession of usury for nothing! By the prompt dismissal of the man in his employment, he deprived the Indians of the assistance which their confederate would have rendered them in getting into the house. By the prompt transport of the Moonstone to his banker's, he took the conspirators by surprise before they were prepared with a new plan for robbing him. How the Indians, in this latter case, suspected what he had done, and how they contrived to possess themselves of his banker's receipt, are events too recent to need dwelling on. Let it be enough to say that they know the Moonstone to be once more out of their reach; deposited (under the general description of 'a valuable gem') in a banker's strong room. Now, Mr. Bruff, what is their third chance of seizing the Diamond? and when will it come?"

As the question passed his lips, I penetrated the motive of the Indian's visit to my office at last!

"I see it!" I exclaimed. "The Indians take it for granted, as we do, that the Moonstone has been pledged; and they want to be certainly informed of the earliest period at which the pledge can be redeemed—because that will be the earliest period at which the Diamond can be removed from the safe keeping of the bank!"

"I told you you would find it out for yourself, Mr. Bruff, if I only gave you a fair chance. In a year from the time when the Moonstone was pledged, the Indians will be on the watch for their third chance. Mr. Luker's own lips have told them how long they will have to wait, and your respectable authority has satisfied them that Mr. Luker has spoken the truth. When do we suppose, at a rough guess, that

the Diamond found its way into the money-lender's hands?"

"Towards the end of last June," I answered, "as well as I can reckon it."

"And we are now in the year 'forty-eight. Very good. If the unknown person who has pledged the Moonstone can redeem it in a year, the jewel will be in that person's possession again at the end of June, 'forty-nine. I shall be thousands of miles away from England and English news at that date. But it may be worth *your* while to take a note of it, and to arrange to be in London at the time."

"You think something serious will happen?" I said.

"I think I shall be safer," he answered, "among the fiercest fanatics of Central Asia than I should be if I crossed the door of the bank with the Moonstone in my pocket. The Indians have been defeated twice running, Mr. Bruff. It's my firm belief that they won't be defeated a third time."

Those were the last words he said on the subject. The coffee came in; the guests rose, and dispersed themselves about the room; and we joined the ladies of the dinner-party upstairs.

I made a note of the date, and it may not be amiss if I close my narrative by repeating that note here:

June, 'forty-nine. Expect news of the Indians, towards the end of the month.

And that done, I hand the pen, which I have now no further claim to use, to the writer who follows me next.

THIRD NARRATIVE.

Contributed by Franklin Blake.

CHAPTER I.

IN the spring of the year eighteen hundred and forty-nine I was wandering in the East, and had then recently altered the travelling plans which I had laid out some months before, and which I had communicated to my lawyer and my banker in London.

This change made it necessary for me to send one of my servants to obtain my letters and remittances from the English consul in a certain city, which was no longer included as one of my resting places in my new travelling scheme. The man was to join me again at an appointed place and time. An accident, for which he was not responsible, delayed him on his errand. For a week I and my people waited, encamped on the borders of a desert. At the end of that time the missing man made his appearance, with the money and the letters, at the entrance of my tent.

"I am afraid I bring you bad news, sir," he said, and pointed to one of the letters, which had a mourning border round it, and the address on which was in the handwriting of Mr. Bruff.

I know nothing, in a case of this kind, so unendurable as suspense. The letter with the mourning border was the letter that I opened first.

It informed me that my father was dead, and that I was heir to his great fortune. The wealth which had thus fallen into my hands brought its responsibilities with it; and Mr. Bruff entreated me to lose no time in returning to England.

By daybreak the next morning I was on my way back to my own country.

The picture presented of me, by my old friend Betteredge, at the time of my departure from England, is (as I think) a little overdrawn. He has, in his own quaint way, interpreted seriously one of his young mistress's many satirical references to my foreign education; and has persuaded himself that he actually saw those French, German, and Italian sides to my character, which my lively cousin only professed to discover in jest, and which never had any real existence, except in our good Betteredge's own brain. But, barring this drawback, I am bound to own that he has stated no more than the truth in representing me as wounded to the heart by Rachel's treatment, and as leaving England in the first keenness of suffering caused by the bitterest disappointment of my life.

I went abroad, resolved—if change and absence could help me—to forget her. It is, I am persuaded, no true view of human nature which denies that change and absence *do* help a man under these circumstances: they force his attention away from the exclusive contemplation of his own sorrow. I never forgot her; but the pang of remembrance lost its worst bitterness, little by little, as time, distance, and novelty interposed themselves more and more effectually between Rachel and me.

On the other hand, it is no less certain that, with the act of turning homeward, the remedy which had gained its ground so steadily, began now, just as steadily, to drop back. The nearer I drew to the country which she inhabited, and to the prospect of seeing her again, the more irresistibly her influence began to recover its hold on me. On leaving England, she was the last person in the world, whose name I would have suffered to pass my lips. On returning to England, she was the first person I inquired after, when Mr. Bruff and I met again.

I was informed, of course, of all that had happened in my absence: in other words, of all that has been related here in continuation of Betteredge's narrative—one circumstance only being excepted. Mr. Bruff did not, at that time, feel himself at liberty to inform me of the motives which had privately influenced Rachel, and Godfrey Ablewhite, in recalling the marriage promise, on either side. I troubled him with no embarrassing questions on this delicate subject. It was relief enough to me, after the jealous disappointment caused by hearing that she had ever contemplated being Godfrey's wife, to know that reflection had convicted her of acting rashly, and that she had effected her own release from her marriage engagement.

Having heard the story of the past, my next inquiries (still inquiries after Rachel!) advanced

naturally to the present time. Under whose care had she been placed after leaving Mr. Bruff's house? and where was she living now?

She was living under the care of a widowed sister of the late Sir John Verinder—one Mrs. Merridew—whom her mother's executors had requested to act as guardian, and who had accepted the proposal. They were reported to me, as getting on together admirably well, and as being now established, for the season, in Mrs. Merridew's house in Portland Place.

Half an hour after receiving this information, I was on my way to Portland Place—without having had the courage to own it to Mr. Bruff!

The man who answered the door was not sure whether Miss Verinder was at home or not. I sent him up-stairs with my card, as the speediest way of setting the question at rest. The man came down again with an impenetrable face, and informed me that Miss Verinder was out.

I might have suspected other people of purposely denying themselves to me. But it was impossible to suspect Rachel. I left word that I would call again at six o'clock that evening.

At six o'clock, I was informed for the second time that Miss Verinder was not at home. Had any message been left for me? No message had been left for me. Had Miss Verinder not received my card? The servant begged my pardon—Miss Verinder *had* received it.

The inference was too plain to be resisted. Rachel declined to see me.

On my side, I declined to be treated in this way, without making an attempt, at least, to discover a reason for it. I sent up my name to Mrs. Merridew, and requested her to favour me with a personal interview at any hour which it might be most convenient to her to name.

Mrs. Merridew made no difficulty about receiving me at once. I was shown into a comfortable little sitting-room, and found myself in the presence of a comfortable little elderly lady. She was so good as to feel great regret and much surprise, entirely on my account. She was at the same time, however, not in a position to offer me any explanation, or to press Rachel on a matter which appeared to relate to a question of private feeling alone. This was said over and over again, with a polite patience that nothing could tire; and this was all I gained by applying to Mrs. Merridew.

My last chance was to write to Rachel. My servant took a letter to her the next day, with strict instructions to wait for an answer.

The answer came back, literally in one sentence.

"Miss Verinder begs to decline entering into any correspondence with Mr. Franklin Blake."

Fond as I was of her, I felt indignantly the insult offered to me in that reply. Mr. Bruff came in to speak to me on business, before I had recovered possession of myself. I dismissed the business on the spot, and laid the whole case before him. He proved to be as incapable of enlightening me as Mrs. Merridew herself. I asked him if any slander had been spoken of me in Rachel's hearing. Mr. Bruff

was not aware of any slander of which I was the object. Had she referred to me in any way, while she was staying under Mr. Bruff's roof? Never. Had she not so much as asked, during all my long absence, whether I was living or dead? No such question had ever passed her lips.

I took out of my pocket-book the letter which poor Lady Verinder had written to me from Frizinghall, on the day when I left her house in Yorkshire. And I pointed Mr. Bruff's attention to these two sentences in it:

"The valuable assistance which you rendered to the inquiry after the lost jewel is still an unpardoned offence, in the present dreadful state of Rachel's mind. Moving blindfold in this matter, you have added to the burden of anxiety which she has had to bear, by innocently threatening her secret with discovery through your exertions."

"Is it possible," I asked, "that the feeling towards me which is there described, is as bitter as ever against me now?"

Mr. Bruff looked unaffectedly distressed.

"If you insist on an answer," he said, "I own I can place no other interpretation on her conduct than that."

I rang the bell, and directed my servant to pack my portmanteau, and to send out for a railway guide. Mr. Bruff asked, in astonishment, what I was going to do.

"I am going to Yorkshire," I answered, "by the next train."

"May I ask for what purpose?"

"Mr. Bruff, the assistance I innocently rendered to the inquiry after the Diamond was an unpardoned offence, in Rachel's mind, nearly a year since; and it remains an unpardoned offence still. I won't accept that position! I am determined to find out the secret of her silence towards her mother, and her enmity towards *me*. If time, pains, and money can do it, I will lay my hand on the thief who took the Moonstone!"

The worthy old gentleman attempted to remonstrate—to induce me to listen to reason—to do his duty towards me, in short. I was deaf to everything that he could urge. No earthly consideration would, at that moment, have shaken the resolution that was in me.

"I shall take up the inquiry again," I went on, "at the point where I dropped it; and I shall follow it onwards, step by step, till I come to the present time. There are missing links in the evidence, as I left it, which Gabriel Betteredge can supply. And to Gabriel Betteredge I go!"

Towards sunset, that evening, I stood again on the well-remembered terrace, and looked once more at the peaceful old country house. The gardener was the first person whom I saw in the deserted grounds. He had left Betteredge, an hour since, sunning himself in the customary corner of the back yard. I knew it well; and I said I would go and seek him myself.

I walked round by the familiar paths and passages, and looked in at the open gate of the yard.

There he was—the dear old friend of the happy days that were never to come again—there he was in the old corner, on the old beehive chair, with his pipe in his mouth, and his Robinson Crusoe on his lap, and his two friends, the dogs, dozing on either side of him! In the position in which I stood, my shadow was projected in front of me by the last slanting rays of the sun. Either the dogs saw it, or their keen scent informed them of my approach. They started up with a growl. Starting in his turn, the old man quieted them by a word, and then shaded his failing eyes with his hand, and looked inquiringly at the figure at the gate.

My own eyes were full of tears. I was obliged to wait for a moment before I could trust myself to speak to him.

KNOTS.

KNOTS are of great antiquity, perhaps as old as human fingers; in proof, may be adduced the mystery attached to, and the traditions connected with, several knots. They formed part of the sorcerer's stock in trade, as they have recently formed part of the spirit-juggler's. The Lapland witches sold winds, in the shape of knots on a rope; the purchaser untied the knot corresponding to the wind he wanted. The true-lover's knot, Sir Thomas Browne tells us, "had, perhaps, its original from the nodus Herculeanus, or that which was called Hercules his knot [very tight and esteemed sacred], resembling the snaky complication in the caduceus or rod of Hermes." The Gordian knot, which we should much like to see, is another ancient celebrity. Gordius, be it remembered, was a Phrygian husbandman promoted to a kingdom by the oracle of Apollo. In memory whereof, he hung up his plough-traces as a votive offering in the temple of Jupiter. One rope of those traces he tied with so cunning a knot, that it was foretold that whoever loosed it should be king of all Asia. Alexander the Great, because he could not untie it, cut it with his sword.

Instead of the maxim "*Est modus in rebus*," we might often say, "*Est nodus in rebus*," to indicate that the "res" are knotty affairs—which need not be adverse or unpleasant. A knot of dear friends is delightful company. Knotted wood is sought out for cabinetwork and inlaying. The moon's nodes or knots in her orbit are got over by our satellite without much difficulty. However perplexing the plot of a drama may be, we are satisfied if the dénouement, or unknottng, be good. There is a little marsh-bird, the knot (a favourite dish with King Canutus, from whom it takes its specific Latin name), which is so excellent to eat, that Ben Jonson includes "knots and stints" in his list of delicacies. The more knots an hour a ship can make, the better the passengers will like it. Many a pair of

lovers would willingly tie with their tongues a knot which they cannot untie with their teeth. A "quipos" or Peruvian letter, composed of knots made on a number of diversely coloured strings, may often have conveyed good news. Still, there are knots sinister as well as knots propitious. If there exist a true-lovers' knot, there is also a knot to hinder love—namely the magical *nœud d'aiguillette*, performed in several ugly fashions. The antidote is to wear a ring in which the right eye of a weasel is set. Knot-grass, with its minute and pretty flowers, is believed to have the effect of stunting and dwarfing the growth of children and animals to whom it is administered.

Knots are a study in themselves, an art, an accomplishment. They may be considered historically, biographically, technically, and metaphorically.

What was the subtle knot with which Samson tied the foxes' tails together in pairs, with a firebrand between them? Himself, the men of Judah bound with two new cords; but how? The middle-age jailors and executioners must have had their knots of considerable efficiency; as when a culprit, or feudal rival, was tied to four horses, and so torn in quarters by their pulling in opposite directions. How was Mazzeppa bound to his steed? There are real knots and make-believe knots. The officials who transferred convicts from prison to the galleys, as well as those who kept and managed them in the various bagnes of Europe, must have had some slight knowledge of knots. Nor were the "two nautical gentlemen," who shut up the Davenport, bad scholars in this branch of art.

That wrinkle, as recorded by Mr. Galton, deserves to be set forth here. It hangs on the fact that an active man, whose hands and feet are small, can be but imperfectly secured by ligatures, unless the cord or whatever else you use has been thoroughly well stretched. Many people have exhibited themselves for money, who have allowed themselves to be tied hand and foot and then put in a sack, whence they have emerged in a few minutes, with the cords in a neat coil in their hands. The brothers Davenport possessed this skill, but they knew better than to show themselves for pence at country fairs. By implying that they were released by supernatural agency, they held fashionable and profitable séances in London. The two exhibitors were tied, face to face in a cupboard, respectively by two persons selected by the audience, and who inspected one another's knots as well as they could. On their expressing themselves satisfied, the cupboard was closed and the lights in the room were kept low for five or ten minutes, until a signal was made by the confined performers. Then, in a blaze of gaslight, the doors were opened from within, and out walked the two men, leaving the rope behind them.

At length two nautical gentlemen insisted on using their own cord, which they had previously well stretched. This proceeding baffled the Davenports. Thenceforward, wherever they

showed themselves, the nautical gentlemen also appeared, appealing to the audience to elect them to tie the exhibitors' hands. In this way, they exposed the supernatural pretensions and fairly drove them out of England. The skill of the brothers was praiseworthy, but their imposture was unbearable.

On one occasion, Mr. Galton was proposed by an audience to tie their hands. He did his best, and also scrutinised his colleague's knot, as well as the dark and confined space in which the exhibitors were tied, permitted. The cord was, perhaps, a little too thick, but it was supple and strong; and Mr. Galton was greatly surprised at the ease with which the brothers disembarassed themselves. They were not more than ten minutes in getting free. Of course, if either of the exhibitors could struggle loose, he would assist his colleague. It was an ingenious idea, too, to have two persons, and not one person, to tie them. It was improbable that a person, taken at hap-hazard, should be capable of tying his man securely; it was doubly improbable that two persons so taken should both be capable. If it were twenty to one against any one person's having sufficient skill, it was twenty times twenty, or four hundred to one, against both the persons selected to tie the Davenports being able to do so effectively.

To tie a man's hands behind his back, Mr. Galton assures us a handkerchief is the best thing; failing that, take a thin cord. It is necessary that its length be not less than two feet, but two feet six inches is the proper length. For a *double tie*, it should be three feet six inches. If you are quick in tying the common "tom-fool's knot," known to every sailor, it is the best for the purpose. Put the prisoner's hands one within each loop, then draw tightly the running ends, and knot them together. To secure a prisoner with the least amount of string, place his hands back to back, behind him, then tie the thumbs together, and also the little fingers. Two bits of thin string, each a foot long, will do this thoroughly.

Technically, there is the seamstress's knot, for retaining the end of the thread in her work; there is likewise the weaver's knot, for renewing the continuity of a broken warp. There are packers' knots, hangmen's knots, guillotine-men's knots, (for the previous "toilette"), slave-drivers' knots, cat-o'-nine-tails-men's knots; while sailors are universally and altogether men of knots.

Many stitches are incipient knots; as chain-stitch, lock-stitch, herring-bone-stitch, and the rest. They really go with the knots that bind various materials together. On the other hand, netting, knitting, and crochet work, are knots that cause a single thread to weave itself into a tissue. This part of the subject naturally branches into braids. Whether it be a whiphong composed of several strands, or of only a single strip or cord contorted and involved with its own proper self; whether it be a horse's mane or tail plaited with straw to appear at a fair, or a lady's back

hair or chignon braided, with or without ribbons, out of three, four, or more separate tresses; it cannot escape from its close relationship to knots.

Metaphorically, a river can tie a knot, however hard the feat might be to accomplish literally;

Though Fate had fast bound her,
With Styx nine times round her,
Yet music and love were victorious.

Music, it appears, can do the reverse;

In notes with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,
With wanton head, and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony.

At the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers in Paris, are numerous examples of knots, arranged in the order of their intricacy. Mr. Galton's excellent *Art of Travel*, from which we have already quoted, gives not a few. There you find represented the three elementary knots which every one should know; namely, the timber-hitch, the bowline, and the clove-hitch. At page 51 are mountaineering knots. Of one, No. 4, a diagram is given, *in order that no one may imitate it*, as it belongs to the family of knots which most weaken a rope. Its nearest neighbour for mischief is the common single knot, of which no diagram is needed. For the simple and serviceable Malay-hitch, and for the Norwegian mode of tying a parcel on your back like a knapsack, we refer the reader to Mr. Galton's instructive and amusing book.

But scattered hints and partial information will not suffice for the British public. It is an honourable characteristic of our literature that it contains numerous admirable and complete treatises on many special subjects. Mr. Robert Hardwicke, publisher of many pleasant and useful works, has sent forth a *Book of Knots*, by Tom Bowling, illustrated with one hundred and seventy-two diagrams, showing the manner of making every knot, tie, and splice, for the moderate price of half-a-crown, or nearly six knots a penny. It proves the feasibility of the old Peruvian knot-writing. If with an alphabet of six-and-twenty letters we can convey intelligence to the full extent of our need, it would be odd if we could not do so, though not in quite so portable a form, with one hundred and seventy-two knots.

ENGLISH EYES ON FRENCH WORK.

LAST year the council of the Society of Arts determined that a certain number of skilled artisans should be sent over to Paris to study the productions of their various trades in the Exposition there. The committee of Council on Education offered the society five hundred pounds for the purpose, provided an equal sum was raised by voluntary contribution. What was raised was exactly sixpence under a thousand and forty pounds; which enabled about eighty

workmen to visit the Exposition and to write reports on what they saw. The men were accredited to M. Haussoullier, who had been appointed by the commissioners to the charge of the British workman's hall in the Exhibition building; and M. Fouché, an artisan member of the Conseil des Prud'hommes, attended them as guide and interpreter. The Society of Arts have published their reports in one thick volume; and a most interesting volume it is; showing what impression French life, French manners, and French industries made on the unadulterated British intellect, and how far the insular workman considered himself inferior or superior to his continental rival.

The reports are also interesting as a study of character in their various treatment of the subject in hand. Some are pictorial, taking in the outside aspect of things, and detailing personal doings and adventures; others are technical, dealing only with the method of the special manufacture; some are critical; others are statistical; some show that the authors thought more of themselves and how they were doing their work, rather than of the work itself, and others show exactly the reverse. Some, again, are enthusiastic about everything. The charm and spell of novelty was on their writers. The pretty, odd, theatrical life of Paris when seen for the first time, the white caps of the women, the blue blouses of the working men, the clear air and absence of "blacks," the pleasantly showy cafés in place of our hideously brilliant gin-shops, the outward gaiety and good temper and courteous little forms of politeness, the individual freedom mixed with that peculiar public discipline which at first sight seems the very ideal of good government—all was as delightful to certain of the more genial sort as it was to us when we first went over; and it takes us back to the freshness of our own early pleasure in French life to read the boyish delight of some among them. But all were not equally charmed. Some disliked the Sunday gaiety; others disliked so much gaiety generally, and thought the men frivolous and childish who could find amusement in puerile pleasures; others, again, contrasted the orderliness and innocence of the French fêtes with the brutal sottishness of London junketings, and gave the palm to the Gaul. All liked the Conseil des Prud'hommes; all liked the liberal opening of the museums, &c., to the working classes, and the care taken of the workman's education; some liked the mode of life, the brightness and movement of the Boulevards, and the family gatherings in the open air; others thought there was no family life in the nation—taking home to mean the four walls which enclose one's pots and pans. "From what I saw of the French nation," says one, with a grave oddness of phrase very expressive, "I consider that their mode of life is peculiarly foreign to the English mind. They appear remarkably fond of imbibing their favourite wines while exposing themselves to the public gaze." All liked the clean and tidy look of the working

women, and compared it with the dragging trains and second-hand finery of their own wives and daughters. The short dress carried it invariably over the limp long petticoat; and the white cap carried it over the dirty, battered, and tawdry bonnet. All the men were pleasantly impressed by the self-respect, the order, the equality, of the workshops; to find the men and foremen alike in the blouse, with no difference of costume to mark the minute differences in grade to which we attach so much importance, but all content to appear of the "wages class."

The most enthusiastic admirer of French ways and modes is the writer who leads off the rest—Mr. Hooper, a cabinet-maker—and his paper is certainly the most graphic and pictorial. It is a charming sketch, and would do honour to a practised hand; yet Mr. Hooper says of himself that this was the first fortnight's holiday he had ever had, and that he "had known little else than toil from his boyhood, working at a bench not less than ten hours per day in a dismal, dirty, unhealthy workshop"—not exactly the kind of life for acquiring a good method either of observation or narration. But if his paper stand out as the most observant and pictorial, there are others which are as thoughtful, and of even a more refined tone of criticism. "The art of wood-carving," says Mr. Baker, "may be said to begin at the rudest notching and terminate in the noblest thoughts, expressed in the most beautiful forms." Mr. Wilson, a cutler, quotes Chaucer and Rabelais, and knows all about the famous Damascus blades; throughout, one is struck by the comparatively extensive reading and the justness of observation, of men toiling painfully at their life's labour for daily wages.

As a cabinet-maker stands at the head of the list, we will take cabinet-making first. All the workers in this trade who have written on what they saw, agree in two statements; first, that the French wood-carvings are infinitely superior to our own; second, that their rough or carcass work is just as inferior. "I saw carvings that seemed to me to be impossible to have been done with tools, but must have grown into shape and form, they were so delicate and chaste," says Mr. Hooper. But he adds soon after that the carcass work is not so well done as ours; that our dovetailing and drawer work is neater; that they have more jointing than we have, as the stuff they use in carcass work is very narrow and hard, whereas we use wide, soft pine. A second witness, or rather two in one, Messrs. Hughes and Prior, are even more explicit as to the demerits of the rough work. They say that carpentry is gradually falling into disuse in Paris, in consequence of the substitution of iron for wood, and that such specimens of work by French joiners as they saw were mostly of a very rude kind. Their partitions were made of rough and crooked scantling, which any English surveyor would have condemned; their joists were placed at irregular intervals, and as if laid at random by labourers,

instead of being fixed by mechanics; their floors were tongued together, and made of boards of any length, so that often the board was joined half way between the joists, with no more security than that given by a narrow wooden tongue and a support underneath; there was apparently no knowledge how to wedge up a piece of framework; and in consequence of certain technical mistakes in workmanship the doors in Paris almost invariably drop on the outside edge. Is it not a common complaint that not a door or window in France will shut properly? That is because they pin their tenons instead of carrying them up through the stiles and wedging up the frame as we should do. To obviate this dropping of the frame in the New Opera House, the sashes are strengthened and disfigured by iron squares screwed on the angles. Another joiner, Mr. Kay, says that at the Palais de Justice "the joinery is being fixed in the style that was constructed in North Britain in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries." "The first joiner that attracted my attention was a smart-looking and active man, about twenty-five years of age. He was employed fixing iron plates, forming three sides of a square, on the top and bottom of some oak casement sashes, the centre piece being two inches longer than the rails, the two sides of the iron plates being one foot six inches long by one and a quarter inches, and sunk level with the rails and stiles of the sash, for the purpose of keeping the sash together, and it really wanted it. The frame looked well enough outside, but when I examined the tenons and mortices they were so badly fitted that neither glue nor lead would have been of any use, and it had none. His chisels were made like masons' scabbling tools or ship carpenters' caulking-irons. He was working very diligently, but the interpreter, M. Fouché, told me he was a blacksmith. He was making little progress, his tools being badly adapted for the work he was executing. I found then that the locksmiths fitted all the locks and hinges on the doors, windows, &c., which in a measure accounted for the insufficient and clumsy nature of their fixing throughout the different buildings in Paris. The locks were all box-locks, and badly made. The hinges were likewise bad, and of ancient design."

Which graphic account lets us a little into the secret of French door and window carpentry! There was a magnificently carved oak pulpit and staircase from Belgium in the Exposition, which all of us who went there must remember. The carving was lovely, but the joiner's work was rough, rude, and unfinished. The scarf joints of the handrail were made the wrong end up, so that if the lucky possessor of that grand bit of carving ever runs his hand rapidly down the rail in descending the stairs he will probably get a few splinters in his flesh, "a sensation which will be more exciting than agreeable," says the critic. Some of the most beautiful carvings, or what appeared to be carvings, by M. A. Latry, were made of pigs'

blood and dust, compressed in a steel mould; and some that looked like wrought ebony were only of common wood polished and ebonised. One witness objects to the large use made of the scraper and glass-paper for final polish; but another—our old friend, Mr. Hooper—speaks of this as a characteristic excellence, because proving the cleanliness of the French work. Two cabinet-making firms are specially mentioned in these reports; the one is that of M. Fourdinois, which seems to have been taken in some sense as a type of the trade, and the other that of M. Racault and Co., to which is ascribed what honour there may be in having begun the revolution of '48. The firm of Racault is a very large one, employing from five to six hundred hands in all, and in '48 the men, discontented at the high price of bread and the lowness of wages, struck and made a commotion, which increased until it swelled into the revolution which cost Louis Philippe his crown, and gave France King Stork in place of King Log. "Cabinet-makers," says Mr. Hooper, "I find to be the worst paid men in France, as at home, averaging four to six francs per day; carvers and upholsterers, six francs; women, two and a half francs." They work ten hours a day, piece-work, beginning at six and leaving at half-past five; but they do not work so hard as the English, taking life more easily, and mingling more pleasure with their labour. In general they are paid only once a fortnight, which includes Sunday work as well; and which is by no means an enviable mode of paying workmen's wages.

After the cabinet-makers come the workers in glass and pottery, of whom the first spokesman, Mr. Green, is a "ceramic decorator." "Disclaiming all pretensions to learning, I write as a working man on the executive or manipulative part of decoration only," he says modestly, "leaving schools and styles of art to be treated by writers of far higher attainment." But he writes like an educated man himself, and uses all the artists' terms with judgment and propriety. He speaks of the Sèvres manufacture as offering a comparatively new method of decoration to Englishmen, namely, "painting in clay in a state of what is technically called 'slip' on the raw or unfired coloured body of the article, generally of celadon, sage-green, or stone colour," flowing figures of birds, flowers, grasses, &c., "usually with a freedom, truth, and grace most refreshing to behold, some parts of the decoration standing out in such bold relief as to require the aid of the modelling tool in addition to the painter's touch." But he is not deterred or daunted by even such a name as the Sèvres manufactory. We have improved, he says, heartily; and with a distinct recollection of his dejection in 1851 at the inferiority of the British potter, he left the Exposition of 1867 with "feelings nearly akin to pride—certainly with confidence and hope for the future." Minton's china is to him better than any foreign pottery; and of the Limoges enamels sent by that firm, he says they are "clear, soft, and

bright." He speaks of the use of ormolu as an artistic aid but not technical excellence; and one not used by English potters, who always conscientiously meet their difficulties.

Another worker in clay, Mr. Beadmore, is also opposed to the introduction of metal with porcelain as to the imitation of malachite. He, too, is strongly for Minton, and says that his ware is real pottery, but that in foreign ware you find "wings without feathers, snakes without scales." In encaustic tiles, Mr. Cooper, an encaustic tile-maker, says the English are superior to the foreigner. He advises highly vitrified surfaces for pavements, as less liable to abrade by wear and tear. Michael Angelo Pulham has his word on terra-cotta. The English are first, and next to them the Prussians, who have a good warm colour in their work; the French make theirs too light in tint, unless painted; and painting takes away the character, while the bloom or tint of colour gives richness. The Italian terra-cotta has not been burnt long enough; the Algerian is poor. The best terra-cotta workmen can make twelve shillings a day—a moderate worker can make eight shillings a day; this is for piece-work of ten hours' duration. Women get one and threepence a day, and some men only half-a-crown. About five hundred hands are employed in the fifty or sixty pottery and terra-cotta works in Paris; that is, four hundred and twenty men, forty women, and forty boys. Only four manufactories have steam-engines to mix and grind the stuff; by which, consequently, a large amount of labour that could be prevented is expended to no good and to great pecuniary loss. "Iron," says Mr. Randall, quoting Francis Horner, "is the soul of every other manufacture, and the main-spring of civilised society." It forms the greatest gun, the heaviest shot, the longest rope, the sharpest lancet, the most powerful and the most delicate machinery." The French, once so far behind us, are now making rapid strides towards the same point of perfection that we have attained. It is about sixty or seventy years since William and John Wilkinson first introduced coal into France for the purpose of iron-making, and now there are such works as those of Creusot, which alone employ ten thousand men, and turn out one hundred and ten thousand tons of metal annually. A new steel from the works at Charente was exhibited in the Exposition, and got the gold medal; and the Sheffield Atlas Works had also a new steel highly spoken of. Austria and Sweden have adopted the Bessemer process; and in our last exhibition in '62 there was some Taranaki steel of first-rate quality. Some of the French mining and manufacturing proprietors exhibited plans and models of their works and schools, but there were no such things from England. But this is wandering from the special subject, which was pottery.

Shropshire clays and English earthenware are both as good of their kind as can be. Wedgwood puts good figures on inferior substance,

but the painting of birds and foliage on the French jars and jardinières is excellent. The superiority of French art in high-class ornamentation is very obvious. As long as we confine ourselves to geometrical forms in hammering, pressing, turning at the lathes, or painting on the surface, we have no difficulty in holding our own; but when any originality of thought is wanted, or the free educated hand in decoration, our deficiency becomes apparent. The Sèvres process of producing white subjects in relief on celadon grounds is kept a profound secret; and though our workmen went over the Imperial Manufactory, and were courteously shown everything else, they were not allowed to see this part of the works. It is kept a secret from even M. Gilles' men. The difference between *pâte tendre* and *pâte dure*—it is Mr. Randall who is still speaking—consists in the glaze: "on one the glaze is incorporated with the body of the paste, and allows the colours to sink during the firing, so that they appear soft and mellow, on the other the glaze is so hard that the colours remain upon the surface and have a dusky look. The quantity and quality of the glaze on all china manufactured here (in France) prior to the great revolution was such that the whole surface, including the colours, might be denuded, yet upon putting the piece through the kiln, it would come out reglazed." This writer's opinion is that the true *pâte tendre* has not been made since the times of Louis the Fifteenth and Sixteenth, and that the nearest approach to it was that made at Nantgarw, about forty years ago, and which now fetches old Sèvres prices. From what he saw he believes that both were *fritt* bodies—that is, bodies, the materials of which are first mixed, then fired, and, lastly, ground up into clay. The result of which is that they have a vitrified appearance throughout. It was, therefore, a paste, and had absorbed a considerable quantity of glaze which became fully incorporated with it, and which it again gave out in the enamelling kiln. Old Sèvres and Nantgarw china have a yellow waxy tint and texture, unlike anything found in the present day. The expense of making it ruined the Nantgarw proprietors, and the cost and risk arising from its liability to crack in the kiln, have deterred others from making it in England. Old pieces of Sèvres slightly painted are greedily bought by certain of the enterprising sort; the slight sprigs are taken off by fluoric acid, and the piece is elaborately painted and regilt, the sharp touch of the chaser being taken off by the hand, and made to look old and worn by being rubbed with a greasy rag. Plates bought for half a guinea when treated in this manner are sold from five to ten guineas. Mr. Randall says that he has seen his own paintings on old Sèvres at noblemen's houses, which have been bought for the real thing; and Mr. Rose, of the Coalport Works, once bought for old Sèvres a pair of his own vases, which had been taken from the works when white, and painted up for the Sèvres market.

The *pâte tendre* scratches easily, and the great problem is how to have soft colours and a hard surface. Minton uses a softer glaze than formerly, and more of it; hence the rich grounds he produces now, and the soft sinking of the paintings into the glaze in his ware. M. Gille's figures in semi-biscuit china are remarkable productions; we have nothing like them in England. All his clay is ground very carefully four or five times, after being sifted and washed; and the way in which the figures are propped during baking is quite a science.

In the glass manufacture there are two sides, good and bad, excellent and worthless. In glass painting the French get their high lights by a needle-point and not by a brush or "scrub," which gives a more artistic finish, though it is a longer and more tedious process than by the scrub. They cut out their glass for painted windows in the stupid old way, by papers, which we have long discarded; and they lead up the various pieces while painting, instead of simply cementing them together, so that when unleaded the colour is apt to come off at the edges. Ours, by cement, is a better and quicker process. Some of their colours are better than ours, some of ours better than theirs. They have a rose-pink which we have not got, but our "flashed ruby" far surpasses theirs. Salvati has some new tints altogether, so at least says Francis Kirchhoff, glass painter, who was the artisan selected for this special work. He was much struck with some of the old church windows in Paris, and mentions several; among others, St. Sulpice as being remarkable for peculiar rather than for beautiful glass. "But I will not be certain as to the name," he says, naively; "I went into so many churches, and I have got muddled since as to their names." In the modern painted glass there is a tremendous defect from which both England and France equally suffer. Owing, it is supposed, to some corrosive action of the colours employed—probably inferior mineral colours—after the painting is burnt in, the coloured parts get full of small holes letting in the clear light, which is by no means an advantage.

From glass-painting to glass-blowing is only a step. Mr. Barnes, glassmaker, finds lack of ease and finish in the way in which French handles are affixed to jugs, &c. The manipulation, too, is different with them and us. We do our lighter work by hand; in France it is blown in wooden moulds. Their coloured glass is better than ours; but our white glass is better than theirs. Indeed, they do not come near the crystalline purity of our best makers. They make more beautiful things than we do, but they finish them off ill; the feet and stems of their glasses and vases being often scratched; "our masters would decline to receive such work from the hands of their workmen. We in England are making straw-stemmed wine glasses, from one ounce to one ounce and a half," we are quoting Mr. Barnes, "whereas the foreigners make their lightest wines about

three ounces, using double the quantity of metal that the English workman does. I myself have made an antique jug ten ounces in weight, which is capable of holding an imperial quart." Our workmen will make ninety wine glasses in six hours, the French under a hundred in ten hours; and yet they can undersell us. The writer of this report, evidently a skilled first-class workman, has three pounds ten shillings a week; a French workman of the like grade has five pounds in the fortnight; our men work forty-eight hours in the week, theirs only forty. Time was when a well sheaved wine glass could be made only in England, when all foreign goods of the kind were flatted or cut at the edge, so as to give them the appearance of having been repaired; but France and Belgium last year both showed wine glasses with tops as well sheaved, hollow stems as well formed, and generally as well made as the best work on the English stalls. "Our flint glass," says one workman; Mr. Swene, as did his predecessor, "is infinitely superior to theirs in colour and brilliancy. They do not come near Osler's, whose flint cut glass is almost as bright as diamonds; their best flint cut glass, Baccarat's, is colourless and dead beside Osler's." One peculiarity is noticed by Mr. Wilkinson. "If you get a melon and a pear, cut them into various depths, and vary the size of opening, you get all the patterns of the lamp-glasses used in France and on the Continent."

In tool making, England is in advance of France, Belgium, and Germany, for the highest excellence in model and the cutting edge in saws and tools. Some houses have English saw-makers, and the highest class of toolmakers on the Continent are not equal to us, though the second class is, as well as cheaper than us. Our make of cutlery is imitated very extensively, as are our trade marks, and most of the best French cutlery is made of English cast steel.

We possess superior natural advantages, more especially good grindstones and a cheaper supply of coal and steel; also more capital and larger commercial relations. Our Sheffield steel-makers have a monopoly of the best Swedish iron.

In hammered iron, the old story of French excellence in art and English superiority in workmanship is again repeated. The English weld their hammered iron, and the French rivet or braze theirs. The French small-arms are beautiful, and the best are better than ours, but our breech-loaders are the best. Their locks are not so good as ours, and their work is dearer, from two to three hundred francs being asked for goods for which we should ask six or seven pounds. There was a capital invention shown—a cavalry sword with a revolver in the hilt; and there was a Belgian gun for fourteen francs seventy-five centimes, which the reporter, Mr. Hibbs, says candidly was the worst he ever handled. But France is rapidly drawing to the front in all kinds of metal work, even in things in which we have for generations held the foremost place. In some things, though, both France and England are distanced; as in

papier-maché and japanned goods, by Japan and China; in coloured satin, by both countries; in carved woods, by the East generally; in gold and silver filagree work by Malta, Algeria, Persia, India, and Italy; in inventive machinery by the Americans; and in silver repoussé work by Russia. But, on the whole, France and England stand at the head of the greater industries, and, while rivals to each other, leave all the rest of the world behind.

SHAKESPEARE AND TERPSICHORE.

To the British tourist, whiling away the spring days in fair Florence, waiting, it may be, to witness the festivals in honour of a royal marriage, or pausing on his northern flight from Rome or Naples before finally taking wing across the Alps, this announcement on the public bills and placards of the Pergola Theatre is not without interest:

ROMEO E GIULIETTA,

TRAGIC OPERA.

To be followed by

SHAKESPEARE;

or,

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

GRAND BALLET.

He is here, then, in a new guise, this Proteus-like "Divine Williams," "Swan of Avon," or howsoever he be named in the various dialects of men. Rossini has given to the world that exquisite dying lay (the last notes of the ill-fated Desdemona, ceasing in sweetness like a crushed flower), *Assisa al piè d'un salice*. Verdi has Italianised the "blasted heath," and made Lady Macbeth bid her guests to their revels with a rousing *brindisi*, *Si colmi il calice!* Of Romeos and Juliets, Montecchi e Capuleti, there is no end. And in these latter days doth not Hamlet himself "discourse most eloquent music," and a fair Swede warble forth the lovely lunacies of Ophelia until all hearts be melted by the pouring in of sad sweet song at the ears? And now, painting, poetry, and music, having each in turn seized the inexhaustible Shakespeare, and "played upon"—if not "fretted"—him, up rises the goddess of the dance, and, circling the astonished Bard in her gracefully rounded arms, whirls him away to tread a fantastic measure under her guidance. Shakespeare; or, a Midsummer Night's Dream. Grand Ballet.

Shakespeare, from an *Italo-histrionico-terpsichorean* point of view!

Alons! To the Pergola! Let us thither on this 25th evening of April, 1868, to see what we shall see.

Note first, that the theatre—one of the most elegant and well-proportioned in Europe—is at the beginning of the evening nearly empty. Romeo e Giulietta, or so much of M. Gounod's opera as the powers that be condescend to give us, is evidently not attracting the public. Neither will we, whose business is with terpsi-

chore, and not with her sister muse, speak of that performance, which, indeed, but too evidently serves as a mere prelude, or "lever du rideau," for the main business of the evening.

Be it recorded, too, that we, sitting in the pit of the Pergola, did altogether judge of the argument or conduct of the ballet by the unassisted light of nature, having neither libretto nor programme to refer to, in case of doubt or bewilderment. And such cases did arise, even rather frequently! But in this way, perhaps, the British tourist may be enabled the more faithfully to report to his countrymen the impression made upon him by "Shakespeare; a grand ballet."

The libretto of a ballet is at best an arbitrary document, so to speak, and one from which there is no appeal. It being evident that should the libretto set forth that when the prima ballerina, nicely balanced on the great toe of her right foot, raises her left leg in the air at right angles with her body, and gently waves her arms to and fro, to soft music, such action means, and shall be held to mean, that the weather is beautiful; that we may look out for squalls; that she is in love; that she never will marry the count; that she would be glad of a little refreshment; that she never felt better in her life, and will be happy to favour the company with a "pas," expressive of unlimited rapture; or any other conceivable statement, the spectator has no choice but to submit and acquiesce. Nay, if he be of a flexible and conformable cast of mind, he may even by-and-by trace in the wavings and pirouettes some faint shadowing forth of the meaning given to them in the libretto! We, however, in our character of British tourist, cast aside all such leading-strings whereby the ballet-master cunningly sways the mind of man hither or thither as he will, and sturdily take our "posto distinto" in the wide pit of the Pergola, unprejudiced by any ex-parte statement as to what we are going to see.

The curtain descends on the first scene of the fourth act of *Romeo e Giulietta*; and now the buzz and hum of talk grow louder, and the rows of crimson chairs are dotted more thickly with sombre coats—black, brown, blue, or mingled pepper-and-salt. Some sprinkling, too, there is of brighter feminine garments, gossamer bonnets, glossy folds of silk. The white and gold frames of the private boxes—in Italian theatres all the boxes are private boxes—begin to show within them, groups of heads. Heads pretty or ugly, smart or dowdy, young or old, furnished or empty, as the case may be, but all addressing themselves with considerable attention to that canvas screen which divides us as yet from "Shakespeare." The opera has been cut sheer in two, and between its severed portions is inserted the *bonne bouche* of the evening. Layers of bread and mustard, as it were, on either side of the dainty slice of roast meat. Bread and mustard, not in themselves appetising, but serving to give an added relish to the really savoury and succulent morsel. Also, to drop metaphor, the acts of the opera

which hem in the precious ballet at either end are useful, in that they enable us—not British tourist merely, but Florentine of Florence, born under the shadow of Giotto's campanile, heritors of the artistic glories, &c. &c., natives of the "land of song," &c. &c., countrymen of the Pergolesis, Palestrinas, Rossinis, Donizettis, Bellinis, and a great many more too numerous to mention—to enjoy our after-dinner coffee at our ease, and stroll in coolly, bringing with us ambrosial odours of cigars, in time to witness a performance so entirely responsive to our artistic proclivities and perceptions.

Descends from his throne the "maestro di capella," who wields his bâton over solo and chorus. Enters in his place the director of the dance music. Rap, rap, rap. Attention in the ranks! One, two, three, four—crash, clang, rub-a-dub-dub! The prelude, &c., symphony to "Shakespeare; a grand ballet," is beginning. Fluttering of fans, rustling of robes, general inspection of pocket-handkerchiefs. The audience in the pit—not "noi altri" of the posti distinti, but the citizens on those hinder benches—seize this opportunity, almost to a man, of pulling forth, each his pocket-handkerchief, and either blowing his nose with some emphasis or wiping his manly brow. The symphony is not peculiarly melodious, nor indeed peculiarly anything—except loud. One has a great deal of noise for one's money; and it is, too, rather military in its character, so that one would not be surprised to be told that it had been originally composed for "Julius Cæsar; a grand ballet," or "Marshal Blücher; a grand ballet."

At length—and truly at no great length—it ceases, and the canvas screen rises; rises slowly, deliberately, almost, one may say, in a cold-blooded manner, as though there were no colto pubblico, no cultured public anxiously awaiting Shakespeare and the twinkling of innumerable legs. Scene the first is clearly festive in its character. The stage represents—according to all the light of nature we can bring to bear upon it—the interior of an inn. There are tables. Tables on the stage usually mean one of two things: banquets, or documents. Here are no documents. There is, if memory serve us, one bottle; may be more. Groups of nondescript hilarious individuals stand near the tables. There is present, the landlord. Him we recognise by his white apron and rubicund nose. Mine host is an universal character—a citizen of the world. Besides, is not this "Shakespeare; a grand ballet?" And does not the scene lie in England? An English landlord whose nose should not be inflamed with liquor, would indeed show us to be ignorant of our subject. By all means let us have couleur locale. And in this case let the colouring be red, and the locality the landlord's nose. Present also, are the landlord's daughter—a pleasing young lady in the costume of the early part of Henry the Eighth's reign—and the cook. The cook need not be described. Never from our tenderest childhood did we witness a

Christmas pantomime without beholding the twin brother of that cook.

On a placard hanging at one side of the stage are these words, "Questa sera si rappresenta Macbeth." This evening, Macbeth is to be performed. But where? By whom? No matter.

The nondescript hilarious ones trip a gay measure, and then there enters a gentleman in black. Hush—sh—sh! Silence in the house! During the opera a little gentle gossip (let us in honesty state that it must, however, be gentle gossip) does no harm. But now that the ballet has begun, we need to concentrate all our faculties. Sight alone suffices not. We must be undisturbed in our breathless attention even by the dropping of a pin. Know ye not this black velvet apparition with a peaked beard? Dense British tourist, who has never seen anything quite like him, stares bewildered. Stupid, stupid, thrice stupid, Saxon! 'Tis he!—'tis Shakespeare! And if you do not recognise your Williams, so much the worse for you. Williams, the divine one, is a personable fellow enough. Not ungraceful, and with well-turned legs cased in black silk hose.

Shakespeare is received with much friendly show of welcome by the landlord, the cook, the landlord's daughter, and the hilarious assembly. These latter individuals, however, smile dumbly from a distance on the Bard, and linger tenaciously around the tables, as though expecting a supply of victuals by-and-by. But soon it appears that Shakespeare, despite his well-turned legs, his graceful mien, and his inky cloak, is not free from blemishes of temper. For no reason whatsoever that we can discover, he quarrels with the landlord, and invites him then and there to box! The landlord turns up his cuffs, and they set to with a will. The hilarious ones look on smiling, with pointed toes.

Of the style in which Shakespeare and the host display their knowledge of the noble science of self-defence, I feel myself incompetent to convey an idea to the minds of my compatriots. Perhaps it is historic. Perhaps it was thus men boxed in the Elizabethan era. At all events it has this advantage—one, alas! not to be numbered among the merits of our modern P.R.—it can hurt nobody! Babes and sucklings, with puffy pink fists, might box each other so, and come off scatheless. Each man keeps his elbows well in to his side, and makes his clenched hands revolve rapidly over and over one another for some time. Ever and anon he stretches forth his arm and taps his foe lightly on the chest and shoulders. Shakespeare's features express fury; his eyes roll; his brows are knit. But still his fists revolve harmlessly for the most part. At length the landlord unwarily turns his back, and quick as lightning, with the unerring instinct of genius, the Bard seizes the opportunity thus offered to him, of decisive victory. One thump skilfully administered behind, and the landlord falls heavily into the arms of his backer, the cook!

The combat is over. It had no apparent cause, neither does any result seem likely to

follow from it. But as a picture of national manners it has been interesting. It boots not to follow the "grand ballet" throughout all its many incidents: neither would space permit. For the ballet is in three acts. But we may select one or two more "striking situations" as being calculated to give the English reader what we may call a new idea, and vision of several historical personages. Before the inn disappears to make way for other pictures, it becomes the scene of some rather complicated events. Two ladies—one in a long flowing train, the other in the briefest of tarlatan skirts—enter masked, and go through a great deal of exertion. On the long-robed lady removing her mask and black domino, we discover her to be no less a personage than the Virgin Monarch herself. She has a face of ghastly paleness, surmounted by a flaming wig of the hue vulgarly called "carrot": the towering stiff curls of which are piled high above her majestic brow. Her manners are vehement, and free from anything like the stiffness of court etiquette. Her toleration of her attendant's very scant and airy clothing, may suffice to show that Elizabeth's notions on the subject of costume were much more latitudinarian than we are accustomed to suppose. We soon discover, moreover, that her majesty is the victim of a sentimental passion for the wayward Williams! Unhappy Bard, canst thou not control thy notorious infirmity, so far as to appear in the royal presence *sober*? Or, at the least, not *very* drunk? Alas, humiliating as is the spectacle, the haughty queen must behold her poet, bottle in hand, reeling helplessly, in the last depths of intoxication! In vain she pleads, stretching forth her royal hands, and even bending her royal knees in supplication, Shakespeare will not relinquish his bottle. He continues to take sip after sip, regardless of his queen's increasing disgust and distress, until at length he drops into a chair and snores in drunken lethargy.

Such are the flaws in the brightness of genius! Such are the fatal effects of the bottle! Elizabeth and her airy maid of honour put on their masks and fly.

The hilarious ones return, but no longer hilarious. They have changed their dresses, and now appear in the garb of court huntsmen, apparently looking for the queen. Royalty is nowhere to be found. The divine one snores, drunk, in his chair. The landlord proposes something to eat—by the unmistakable gesture of putting his fingers into his mouth and making as though he were swallowing—and everybody goes to dinner very cheerfully amid the jubilant music of hunting horns.

Thus ends the first act. The second act is, perhaps, the most wonderful of the three, but though lengthy in action, it may be described with brevity.

The scene represents a garden on the banks of the Thames. Time, evening. Moon slowly rises to illuminate the spires and towers of London. Also to illuminate the dome of St. Paul's—Sir Christopher Wren's St. Paul's!

—with prophetic lustre. Moreover, she shines upon the divine one, still drunk and still sleeping. He has been carried by majesty's command to this romantic spot, chair and all.

There enters a tall female figure draped in white with flowing gauzy sleeves and veil. She contemplates the Bard with a soft melancholy, and then, pressing her hand to her heart, raises her eyes to Heaven. Then, she steps on a flowery bank at one side of the stage, and seats herself at a harp. An Erard's patent grand we should judge the instrument to be, by its aspect.

The lady throws back her veil. Surely we know those features! Stay; at the first notes of the harp a numerous corps de ballet trip lightly forth, headed by the airy maid of honour, now attired as Titania! That white-robed figure is the queen. Elizabeth Tudor as she appears at the Pergola Theatre in the year of grace 1868. Ye gods, could I but faintly image forth the spectacle of Queen Elizabeth in scarlet wig and white muslin garments, strenuously playing the harp for dancing girls on the banks of the Thames by lime-light!

They are here, the innumerable twinkling legs for which we (colto pubblico) have waited. Gracefully they skip and bound and twinkle, to our great delight, and apparently also to the entire satisfaction of the Maiden Monarch, who sits patiently thrumming her "Erard's grand" in a corner.

How Shakespeare is aroused and surrounded by sportive nymphs, looking (as well he may) inexpressibly bewildered; how he goes through many intricate evolutions, threading the mazy rows of charmers with an accuracy which, under the circumstances, does him great credit; how Titania pulls from her golden sceptre various little scrolls, bearing the words "Coriolano," "Il rè Lear," "Amleto," &c. &c., and presents them to the poet; need not be particularly chronicled. Still less need we follow a serious under-plot, involving a duel—with rapiers, this time—between the divine one and a gallant young courtier.

Come we to the third and concluding act. This is all pomp, triumph, and a kind of terpsichorean high-jinks.

The second and third acts are to each other

—as moonlight unto sunlight,
Are as water unto wine.

The scene is the queen's palace—which palace let no man try to specify—and the courtiers, male and female, throng to do honour to the Swan of Avon, the great national poet. The fair Elizabeth (that amiable weakness of the bottle all forgotten, or at least forgiven) delights to honour our divine Bard. She takes from a pink box which reposes on a velvet cushion in the hands of a page, a wreath of laurel bound with silver. This she claps on Shakespeare's raven locks (placing it in her agitation somewhat on one side), and then leads him to a chair of state beside her own, whence the illustrious pair witness a series of dances by agile coryphæes in gorgeous raiment.

Various are the dances, brilliant the costumes. But for us, British tourist and exile from home, whom as is well known splendour dazzles in vain, the most remarkable performance shall be *The Highland Fling!* Exotic highland fling, torn from thy native wilderness, how hast thou blossomed out from sober heathery plaid and bagpipe, to satin crossed with silk, and the crash of a full operatic orchestra! Marvellous truly is the apparition of four-and-twenty dancers, male and female, clad in short white satin petticoats—not wholly guiltless of crinoline—checked with blue ribbons, and wearing each a black velvet reticule on his or her stomach! Which black velvet reticule, the light of Nature enables us to recognise as the Italian for philabeg. Marvellous, too, is the agility with which the dancers twist and jump and toe-and-heel, with some far off resemblance to a break-down nigger dance; none—absolutely none—to a highland fling when its foot is on its native heath, and its name is McGregor! But we (*colto pubblico*) accept it all as a vivid life-like representation of the mode in which those islanders enjoy themselves. We roar, we shout, we applaud, we encore furiously, the satin-kilted. And in the final *melée* when each corps joins in a grand general winding-up pas, we salute them with special and still increasing fervour.

And now a majestic strain salutes the ear. A strain which causes in the British tourist mind a horrible doubt as to whether he is asleep or awake, sane or insane. That beginning is like— And yet—no. It must be though! Tum, tum, tum, tum-ti-tum. To be sure, "God—save—our—gracious Queen." Of course, *The National Anthem*—with a difference. With, in truth, several differences. But we file out of the Pergola humming, whistling, or singing, our version of it, in high good humour and satisfaction. O, by-the-by! There is another act of the opera to come, isn't there? Ah, never mind. We have seen "Shakespeare; a grand ballet," and that shall suffice us.

As we leave the theatre, a man steps up to us and says, "Signore, your pardon, but I am a new man here (*un'uomo nuovo*) and—*might* I ask you what that first piece was about?" "Romeo e Giulietta!" "Oh, ah, thank you. I never heard of them before."

PIT ACCIDENTS.

THE portico of a country-house on a smiling April morning. Easy-chairs brought out into the sunshine, books, newspapers, and fancy-work at hand. Before us, a trimly-kept lawn, dotted with white daisies and golden flower-spots; and before that again a spacious park with hundreds of lambs frisking merrily on the sward. A background of lofty hills, some covered with fir-trees, others apportioned out into fields, other ending in vast tracts of prairie-land. The grass on these last has a burnt brown

look, making that near us seem brighter and greener by contrast; and the white blossom of the well-laden trees to right and left, the butterflies exulting in the Spring, and the merry carol of the birds perched upon the branches near—all speak of quiet enjoyment and peaceful promise. Beyond the firs a column of white steam, a tall chimney, and a cluster of ugly buildings are discernible, and they denote the whereabouts of a coal-pit; puffs and roars of some mighty machinery in our rear, and the frequent noise of swiftly-rushing trains also break in upon our quiet. But these only give human interest to the scenery.

Black figures appear at the park gate nearest the coal-pit; and as they twine slowly past the clump of trees and into the road running in front of us, they form a regular procession preceding an uncouth load borne upon the shoulders of four of their number. The men are carrying their food-tins and lamp-guards, and in some cases their tools, as if they had finished work for the day, and march solemnly on, three abreast, halting every twenty yards to relieve and change places with the bearers of the load. Slowly pursuing the regular path, and not abating an inch of its distance by walking across the grass, as it might easily have done, this strange procession comes abreast the house, and the thing carried resolves itself into a limp figure with two heads, one falling forward as if belonging to a broken puppet, the other, alert and active and with sparkling eyes, behind it. A blackened man, more dead than alive, is stretched full length upon a wooden door, his head and shoulders supported by a grimy urchin who squats behind him and acts as cushion. The two are elevated in the air, and carried along as if they formed a trophy. There has been an accident down yonder pit, and the injured miner is being conveyed home with all the dismal pomp it is the custom of the country to observe. Work is suspended for the day; the workers sacrifice their pay, and the owner loses their labour. To convey the wounded in a rude litter to their homes, to bear them aloft as if in triumph, and to make a formal parade of accompanying them, are deemed evidences of respect and goodwill. There is nothing of superstition in this observance, nothing of fear of a similar evil chance happening to those left in the pit, and nothing in the nature of the accident to denote a more than ordinary risk of casualty. It is simply the Welsh custom, and, as such, has more than the force of law. Not to give up work when one of their number has been injured, would be thought disrespectful to a comrade, so, as we learn later, the remainder of the day is spent convivially at a neighbouring fair.

There is something repellent in these silent grimy men and boys as they march slowly by and the nature of their errand is understood; for faces and bodies are so ingrained with coal-dust that eyes and teeth alone seem human, and gleam unnaturally white; while the pallor of the poor wretch carried and the glassy fixed-

ness of his stare assert themselves through his artificial blackness much as if he were a painted corpse. He is quite insensible, and lies in his working clothes just as when the huge block of stone crushed him into the coal-bed he was hewing out. Happily, however, this man will, as we hear subsequently, recover. He belongs, moreover, to two local clubs, and will draw sixteen shillings a week while he is laid up. It is to the credit of the pitmen in this valley that they are nearly all equally provident, and that, by organisations which are managed and supported among themselves, they can count upon pecuniary aid when laid low by sickness or disaster. Their doctor, even, though appointed by the coal-owner, is paid by the men themselves, a small per-centage of their earnings being deducted for that purpose. In Durham and Northumberland, it is worth remarking, the cost of medical attendance in cases of accident is borne by the employers, while the colliers pay for professional services if their illness arise from natural causes.

But following the mournful string of people to its destination—the pit-village nestling under the hill behind us—it is piteous to see the faces of the women and children who flock to the doors of the cottages we pass. They know what is the matter. No word seems to be spoken, but the news spreads like wildfire and every door-step in succession has its knot of eager watchers, who, scanning hungrily the features of the senseless man, softly murmur out his name with a sigh, in which relief bears equal share with pity. The suspense is terrible until they know the truth, and see it is not their own husband or brother who is carried. Strict silence is observed by the men advancing, much as if it would be a breach of etiquette to speak, and as they all walk before their wounded brother the women have to peer beyond the procession and through the blinding sunshine to ascertain the truth. At last a little cottage, glaringly clean and smart with recent whitewash, is approached, and a tall dark care-worn looking woman with an infant in one arm, and the hand of the other uplifted so as to shade her eyes, learns that it is to her door Misfortune has come. The two chubby rosy children at her feet, whose hearty robust look looms through the conventional crust of coal dirt, continue their play and chatter, but their mother's countenance tells the whole story. A spasmodic contraction of the brow, an uncontrollable quivering of mouth, and a sudden blanching of the face is followed by a half totter as if she would fall among the gaudy little flower-beds with their bordering of the perpetual whitewash; and then all demonstration is over and she goes quietly indoors to make ready for the sad burden which is to follow. She is now wonderfully calm and self-possessed, and gives a fervent "thank God" when told in Welsh, "It's his back,—not very bad;" but if ever bitter sorrow was written upon a woman's face it is on hers. Still slowly, but with a tenderness and care which go far to condone the painful parade they have hitherto seemed

to make, the bearers take their charge up the little black garden-path and rest it in the cottage. Within, the evidences of love of home furnished by the plentifully and carefully tended flower-beds are abundant. The wounded man's household goods, his chairs and chest of drawers of brightest and newest mahogany; his ornamental monsters of coarse earthenware, and looking like a cheap parody upon the taste in china affected by fine ladies and gentlemen a century ago; his pipe, and Bible, and Welsh newspaper; his clean flannel jacket and cap behind the door; his second food-tin like a monster shaving-box; all speak mournfully of tastes and habits he is far far removed from now. The people near say he knows he is at home; but he makes no sign, though the doctor assures us he will recover.

On our way to the head quarters of the nest of collieries we are in, we are horrified at meeting another procession of precisely similar character to the first. The same silent grimy men, the same formality of marching, the same sad load behind. Another accident has happened in a different pit while we were ascertaining the result of the first, and a compound fracture of the leg and a broken skull are the results. Two pit-lads, one at each end of the body to steady head and legs separately, are on the rude litter aloft, and a coloured cotton handkerchief hides the worst of the head-injuries from view. But in no other particular does this procession differ from the first. The blackened workmen walk moodily on three abreast, with the same slow step, and swing their food-tins and lamp-guards idly by their side. They too, we discover afterwards, spend the remainder of the day at the fair, and show their sympathy for the wounded man by drinking steadily of the heady new ale, which is the favourite stimulant of the district. Another great pit is idle for the day, and in times when work is not too plentiful, when wages have been necessarily reduced, when "half-time" is common, and the whole trade of the district depressed, scores upon scores of households lose a day's bread-winning because the little community has not the courage to emancipate itself from an ancient but unworthy practice. For there is no pretence that these processions are necessary, or are any comfort to the wounded. Ask the men why they go through this absurd form, and why they do not let the victims be carried home expeditiously, quietly, and without fuss, and their only answer is, "It's always been done in this valley and it wouldn't look kind to poor Evan or Thomas if we hadn't given up our work on the day he was hurt." Here and there you hear of solitary instances in which the proprietor or manager has prevailed upon the men to let a wounded comrade be conveyed home without the entire community of his pit sacrificing a day's pay; and some of the most earnest local ministers of religion have exerted their influence against the custom; but until the soft, tender, impressionable Welsh nature is convinced that it is an injury rather than a help

to the wounded to celebrate disaster by a holiday, there is little hope of the senseless habit being abated.

"How did the first accident happen, and where?"

"Why, in the pit you were down yesterday. You'll remember asking what the polished stone surface was above you, and our explaining its danger, when you tapped it. Well, sir, you have here a specimen of one of our regular pit accidents in South Wales. They don't make so much talk as explosions, but they kill off more men every year than all the fire-damp in the world; and the worst part of it is that they might be easily reduced. It's an old story now the difference between the system of working coal here and in the north of England; but its moral isn't enforced for all that, and the consequence is that there's twice as much risk and twice as much disaster for the men. There's not a man who really understands the subject who won't tell you that the way the Welshmen persist in working carries off a large percentage of them annually. To show you how our people oppose all alteration on principle, even when it does not affect their comfort, I'll tell you how one of my neighbours was served a few weeks ago. But, to understand it, I must remind you of what you saw yesterday. Long subterranean passages, called 'headings,' sixty yards apart, running parallel with each other, and other passages from and to each cut every sixteen yards. These minor passages are called stalls, and are kept open until the coal is cleared out. The space emptied is filled up with rubbish, and other long passages with feeders cut so that the face of the coal is progressively exhausted, and only such approaches are maintained as enable the men to get to and from their work, and to convey their waggons to the shaft leading to the pit's mouth. The stone above and about there is brittle and unsafe, and is kept unsupported by coal; hence the painful sight you saw an hour ago. This neighbour of mine had, without issuing any manifesto, or asking the men's opinion, quietly set three of them to work at some stalls, and was bringing coal out of each with treble the rapidity in consequence. The roof and sides were necessarily less tried, for it stands to reason that the shorter time heavy stones are left without support, the less likely they are to fall. The men were perfectly satisfied, and did not even grumble at their enforced association in work, and the pit would have been gradually remodelled on the new system without fuss or stir, only, unfortunately, discussions concerning the fifteen per cent reduction of wages cropped up. A proprietor offered to forego the reduction if his men would agree to work three at a face; and directly his offer got wind, presto! the agitators were alarmed, and all compliance was forbidden. What had been adopted as a matter of course, was refused as a matter of principle, and my friend's miners demanded that the method they had abandoned should be restored. Understand

me, I don't blame the men. They simply succumbed to the power to which statesmen and potentates have to bow; and in yielding to the public opinion of their district, sacrificed their own interest as well as that of their employers. You'll hear all sorts of reasons given by local managers against changing the plan of working, and the talkers and arbitrators of a lower grade use their influence over their fellows to persuade them that improvement is another word for confiscation. The Welsh are a soft-hearted simple race, who yield easily to the gentle pressure of a countryman, though firm as adamant against 'strangers' who seek to effect reforms."

But a heavy responsibility rests upon their teachers. Let us compare the return for 1866 of the inspectors appointed by the crown to report annually upon coal-mines. Here we have:

	Durham.	South Wales.
Total deaths from accidents . . .	115 . . .	120
Persons employed per life lost . .	310 . . .	243
Tons of coal raised per life lost . .	129,826 . .	78,137
Deaths from falls of stone and coal .	23—20 p. ct.	49—41 p. ct.

We see thus that when the men are concentrated, and the "working face" is pushed on vigorously, one hundred and thirty thousand tons of coal are raised for every life lost, and there are only twenty per cent. of fatal accidents from falls of stone or coal; but where the men are scattered over a large area, and "the face" is moved slowly forward, they can only raise seventy-eight thousand one hundred and thirty-seven tons per life, and the fatal accidents from falls are not less than forty-one per cent. If writers and thinkers on these subjects would but turn their attention to this and cognate details, they might help to effect changes which would save far more human life than fire-damp and gas destroy. But the worst of it is that when a great explosion occurs, excitement and perturbation follow to an extent which warps the judgment and blinds people to other dangers which are as imminent and destructive, but which might be dealt with far more readily. For example, people contend that in Wales there is a much worse top than in the North, and that if the system of the North were adopted, it would be impossible to work the coal. But some of the most eminent authorities in the country attest that the roofways of Wales are, on the whole, better than those of Durham, and that if the Welsh method were introduced there the coal could not be worked. It was tried at one great Durham colliery, and had to be given up. But how shall it be made clear to Welsh pitmen that, besides other disadvantages, their mode of working kills off a vast number of them every year? The difficulty is to penetrate through the veil kept between them and the truth. The masters can't do it, because their motives are suspected directly they speak

of alteration. The native overlookers won't do it, because, for reasons of their own, they wish matters to remain as they are. Their own advisers and orators won't do it, because they are, on principle, opposed to anything that conduces to their clients' comfort without elevating themselves. In 1865, an average year, *the deaths underground from explosion in the whole of England, Wales, and Scotland were but one hundred and sixty-eight*, while those from other causes underground were, in round numbers, *nine hundred*. The deaths from falls of the coal and the roof in the same period amounted to three hundred and eighty-one, or two hundred and thirteen more than from all the explosions of the year put together. Deaths from explosion are rare, considering the numbers employed and the nature of the work; and as raising a false issue and directing agitation to the points which need amendment least, is a favourite device of conservatives and obstructives, "I wish," said the friend whom I questioned upon the two accidents of that one day, "I wish all who are, like yourself, interested in the welfare and safety of the pitmen, to understand what their real dangers and hardships are, and how easily some of them might be avoided."

"The second man you saw carried home had been knocked down by one of the large un-wieldy trams or waggons in use here, which weigh nine hundredweight when empty and about a ton and a half when filled with coal. These are especially dangerous when they come down 'a heavy dip'—that is, when the coal lies at a steep inclination, as was the case when the man was injured this morning. There was no means of stopping the tram after he fell, so, as it passed over his legs, it cracked them like sticks of sealing-wax. But the atmospheric engine you saw at work when you were down yesterday will do more to stop this kind of accident than even the small tubs we hope to introduce in place of the trams. That little engine actually does the work of fourteen horses, fourteen men, and fourteen boys, in bringing the coal from the working places to the bottom of the shaft; and it will, we hope, gradually supersede human and animal labour in that branch of pit-work. You see, after the coal has been hewn out by the colliers, the trams filled with it are brought to the shaft by another set of men, called 'hauliers,' and it was to this class that the victim you saw last belonged."

There seemed to be some unhappy fatality connected with my visit to Wales, for the day after the foregoing conversation, while riding over an adjacent mountain, we came upon another wounded collier. We were a considerable distance from any dwelling, and had just cantered across one of the expansive prairie-like sheep-walks with which the mountains hereabouts abound, when we overtook a party of five men engaged in supporting and encouraging a sixth, who bestrode a rough pit-horse, which, in its working gear and harness, plodded slowly along the path.

The injured man's eyes and head were bound up in a coloured handkerchief, but the lower part of his face was visible, and was swollen and discoloured as that of a corpse which has been long drowned. I trace a dreadful resemblance in it to a figure I once saw lying blackened and shapeless in the Morgue at Paris, and hastily, and not without a feeling of sudden sickness, ask his companions what has happened. "Blasting the coal, master, when the charge went off before hur were wanted and blowed hur eyes out," is given in reply. His companions hold him on the horse, walking on each side and behind him, propping and balancing his body much as if it were a heavy sack set endways on the clumsy steed. Though so fearfully disfigured, this man is not insensible, and drinks freely from the bottle put to his mouth by the man at the horse's head. These colliers have been digging out from a "level" near—a place in the mountain where the coal crops up to the surface—and are now wending their way to the injured man's home in the valley below. We have the satisfaction of learning, later, that his sight is saved and his injuries not so severe as they seemed; but we learn, at the same time, that his accident is no uncommon one, and that, though seldom fatal, it injures many pitmen every year. It too often proceeds from carelessness in the men. This collier, for instance, only had his own imprudence to thank for his misfortune. He was engaged, in blasting down the coal with gunpowder, when the charge exploded unexpectedly. Now, the operation of blasting is performed thus: The man drills a hole in the "face" of the coal an inch in diameter and about three feet deep. In this hole he places a cartridge filled with gunpowder, attached to the end of a thin iron rod, called a "pricker." He then fills the hole round the "pricker" with coal-dust, which he rams home so as to make it solid and compact. The "pricker" is next withdrawn, leaving a small hole, into which a fuze is inserted, and this, after it is ignited, gives the man sufficient time to get out of the way before the explosion takes place. This man, it was said, went back too soon. His instructions were not to go back at all; but they will do it, nearly all of them, only to save themselves the trouble of drilling another hole. This kind of accident, moreover, is almost always caused by indiscretion in putting in too "quick" or too "slow" a fuze, so that in the one instance the miner has not time to retire out of danger, and in the other the fuze takes such a long time to ignite the charge that the man, thinking it has missed fire, returns for the purpose of putting in a fresh fuze, when the explosion suddenly takes place.

The three casualties described occurred within twenty-four hours, two of the most serious close to and within a short time of each other. The victims seen by the writer all belonged to the same valley, and their injuries were attributed by the people interested to defects in the system which it would be easy to remove. Is it unreasonable to infer that,

apart from economic or commercial reasons, reform is needed in the coal-working of South Wales?

SISTER ANNE.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER III. (CONTINUED).

I NEVER look back to that time without sorrow. It was a great trial for me to leave my quiet home, cross the sea twice, and seek an unwilling debtor in a strange land; but I undertook it willingly, for his dear sake. Neither that, nor the fatigue I underwent, nor the tribulations—and they were many—which awaited me, would now cost me a sigh, but for other things which this ill-fated journey led to. Ill-fated I call it, though I wonder if forty thousand pounds were ever got back so easily as I got ours. Monsieur Thomas had just died when I arrived in Algiers, and as he was a foundling by birth, the state was his only heir. I set forth my claim, it was indisputable, and was granted almost without contest, though not without some delay. So far, surely, I had no reason to complain. Everything was, or seemed to be, over. Yet a strange presentiment of coming misfortune, which I could not conquer, induced me to send on the money beforehand. A terrible storm overtook our boat the day after we left Africa, and seemed destined to justify my worst forebodings. Sea and sky met in a darkness so fearful, that we could scarcely see the white crests of the angry waves roaring around us, as if eager to devour and swallow us up. An agony like that of death came over me. Oh! to see him again, my boy, my darling—to see him once more, and then, if it were God's will, to die; I remember that I prayed thus, not once, but all the time the storm lasted. When the sky cleared, and the great waves fell and danger went by, I rejoiced, thinking I had prevailed, and so I had, but I little guessed at what cost.

In Paris I found a letter from my dear boy, telling me not merely that the money had reached him safely, but also that he had at once secured our old home "on a long lease." It was a great piece of folly, and I knew it, but I could not be angry with him, do what I would. He wrote so joyously, he seemed so happy, so hopeful! And, after all, we were rich. Our forty thousand pounds had been bearing fair interest all these years, and of that interest, owing to rare good fortune, we were not defrauded. If we chose to shut up part of the house and to be prudent, we could indulge ourselves with sleeping once more beneath the old roof. William's children might play by the fountain where my father and Miss Græme had found me reading long ago, and I might know happy hours again within those dear and stately rooms whence I had been banished so many years. The thought made me happy, very happy. I sat by the open window of my room in the Hotel Meyerbeer. It was night, and lights were burning brightly along the dark

avenues of the Champs Elysées; I heard the roll of carriages, and every now and then bursts of music and thunders of applause from the cirque close by. I saw and heard all this, but as in a dream. The reality was not the gay scene I gazed on; it was that fair home to which I was returning, as I thought, on the morrow. That dear face, that kind voice, that warm clasp and fond embrace which were to be mine so soon, alone were real; the carriages, the lights, the music, the sounds of the foreign city were the dream. But it was not to be. I had not felt quite well during my journey, and I was very ill the next morning. The English doctor I sent for told me at once that I had brought fever with me from Africa. If it had been possible for me to travel on I would have done so, but I could not. All I could do was to write to my brother, and telling him that Paris was a very fascinating city, I bade him not expect me just yet. I would not say more, I would not alarm him, I would not bring him from his new-found joy to my sick bed; but the self-denial cost me very dear. I did not know if my life was in danger. I only knew that the thought of dying in a strange city, of being laid amongst unknown dead, and, above all, of never seeing my darling again, haunted me night and day, like a perpetual nightmare. Ah! what visions were with me as I lay there looking at the light stealing in through the grey persiennes, conning over the strange furniture, listening to voices which, though kind, were foreign, and pining for my own speech and my own kindred in my own land! At length the probation was over. I got well again, and though the doctor said I was far too weak to travel, I went, spite his warnings and grave looks. This journey was safe, easy, and rapid; I wonder if there was a happier heart than mine when I reached our village, and, alighting from the carriage that had brought me, I passed through the open gates of our old home and saw the fountain dancing in the red sunlight which lit up the front of the house with a deep gorgeous glow. No one, save a servant-girl, came out to meet me. I did not wonder at it; lest fatigue or illness should detain me, I had not fixed the day of my return when I wrote to my dear brother. But he was well, quite well, the servant told me, and out in the grounds walking. I would not let her go and fetch him. I wished to seek him myself. My heart beat with rapture, as, for the first time after so many years, I found myself again in these dear alleys; and saw the same flowers, it seemed to me, that used to bloom there when Miss Græme and I passed them hand-in-hand. And I had helped to win all this back for her son! The thought was very sweet. It was enchanting, and paid me back tenfold for fatigue, and danger, and sickness, and all I had undergone. I walked very far, still seeking my brother, but I could not find him; yet a sound of voices lured and led me from path to path, and alley to alley, till I turned back disheartened. I had entered the lime-tree avenue,

at the end of which one sees the little fountain with the red house, and a solemn background of deep dark verdure behind it. I was walking slowly, for I felt tired, when I heard the voices again. I stole into the side path, and, lurking there, I waited to see who was coming. Hiding behind a thick clump of trees, I saw this.

A handsome child, a boy richly dressed, came up the avenue, throwing his ball and shouting gaily. After him appeared my brother, and a lady, a beautiful woman, walked by his side. In a moment I knew her; this was Ellen Gibson. My heart seemed to cease to beat. What had brought her here? She spoke. In that light voice which had once sealed my fate, and which I knew so well, she said:

"I wish, Mr. Gibson, you would plant evergreens at the gate. People do stare in so, and I am sure I saw some one just now moving amongst those trees. And if it were not that, there is no banshee——"

"And how do you know there is no banshee?" he interrupted, in his gay voice.

"Well, at all events it is a comfort to know that dreadful old woman is getting civilised, and wears gloves," said Ellen, pushing away with her foot a glove which I had dropped in my hurry to hide from them.

He laughed. He did not see me, but oh! how I saw him, and how happy, how blest he looked, with the strong light shining on his handsome face. The boy had run on, and was now shouting far away. William thought himself alone with Ellen.

"My darling—my darling wife!" he said; and he took her in his arms, and kissed her.

I leaned against the trunk of a tree, and groaned aloud in my agony. But they had walked on; they did not hear me; they did not see me; they left me there alone with my misery. There is a legend of a maiden's soul in Purgatory who bought, at the cost of a thousand years of pain, the boon of visiting earth to console her lover, and who, finding that he had forgotten her for another love, fulfilled her compact in that one moment. Whilst the tempest was howling around the ship that bore me, I had asked of Heaven to see my brother again, and see him well, prosperous, and happy; and now was not my prayer granted, like that poor soul's? Did I not see him again? Was he not prosperous, thanks to me? And after what I had beheld, could I doubt that he was happy? Ah! I can say it from the depths of my heart, I wished him to marry—I wished him to know whatever joy had been denied to my life; I grudged no good woman his love, and even could have felt satisfied to look on and see another loved far more fondly than I had ever been. But that Ellen Gibson should be the one! That she who had so wantonly destroyed my happiness should reap the fruit of every sacrifice! That she who had robbed me of her brother should have stolen mine from me whilst I was away toiling and suffering for him! That she and her child, strangers to my blood, should

come and possess the lost home I had redeemed for him—all this it was that seemed too much, and overpowered me! I could not bear it. I sank down on the grass, and wept and moaned there as if my heart would break.

A rustling sound roused me. I looked up and saw her. She stood before me in her rich silks, and with her still young beauty seeming to triumph over my ruined life. The fountain played behind her with a low pleasant sound, but instead of my dear Miss Græme, I saw the evil sorceress who had stolen Miss Græme's son from me. She was alone. She did not know me at first, but on recognising me she turned pale and stepped back.

"What are you afraid of?" I asked, bitterly.

"Have I not returned too late to save him from you? Are you not his wife? You were a widow, it seems, though you cannot long have been such. I do not know and do not care by what arts you made him forget that you are almost as old as I am—far too old for him; you did it. You made him so far forget the sister who was away toiling for him, that he did not await her return to marry you. Well, you have prevailed a second time over me. Your brother loved me, and you took him from me, and helped to make him wretched. And, now that you have taken my brother, my child, my darling, make him happy at least, and it will atone, perhaps it will atone, for all the weight of grief you have laid upon me. Tell my brother that he will find me at Rosebower. Here I will never set my foot again."

She did not answer me one word, she looked thunderstruck, nor did I give her time to speak. As fast as I could I walked away. I forgot the carriage, and, leaving by a postern door, I went on to Rosebower like one pursued; it was only the amazed look of the servant who came and opened the door for me that recalled me to myself. I sent her for the driver and my luggage, and sat down in the lonely parlour. How chill, how dreary it looked, with the blinds down and the blank fireplace! Was this my welcome home after near a year's parting? A quick step along the gravel path roused me, and, looking out, I saw my brother. He entered the room pale, disturbed, and half angry.

"Anne," he said, taking me in his arms, "Anne, how is this? Why are you here?"

"My darling," I replied, kissing him, "I am here because it is best for me to be so."

He thought I was angry with him for not waiting my return to marry Ellen, and he proceeded to give me all sorts of reasons, which he had found very convincing, for having taken that step without my knowledge. I heard him out, and seeing she had been silent on my real grievance against her, I was silent too.

"My dear boy," I said, "I love you dearly, and I think I have proved it, but it is not in my power to live at the old house now, so I came here."

"You don't know Ellen," he said, reddening with displeasure; "she is an angel, and your unkindness is breaking her heart."

It was very hard to bear that, but I bore it too. He did all he could to prevail over me, and not succeeding he left me, not in anger, indeed, but in some bitterness. And from that day forth to this he has never been the same to me—never, and he never will be—never. She has conquered him, and she will keep him.

Mrs. Sydney took a dislike to this part of the country soon after my return, and made her husband leave it. They live in town, and lead a gay life I am told, for William makes a great deal of money by civil engineering, and the old house is once more shut up and deserted. William comes down in the autumn, when his wife goes to a fashionable watering-place. It is then I see him. He says he is happy, but I cannot believe it. He looks pale and careworn. The bright happy boy I had once, the hopeful young man who longed for his paternal home are gone, and in their stead I have the pale, sullen, and discontented husband of Ellen Gibson.

I had written thus far, thinking my tale ended and my little dream of life over. Alas! life never ends; great joy and great sorrow were yet in store for me.

CHAPTER IV.

As I sat one evening reading, and wondering at the might of the solace which lies in books, and listening to the low moaning of the wind which came from the shore up to my very garden-gate, the parlour door opened, and Jane, saying "Mr. Gibson, ma'am," showed William Gibson in.

"I did not know you were in England," said I, trying not to seem flurried, and to look simply glad, as one should be, on seeing an old acquaintance.

"I have not been in England more than a few days," he replied. "I came from Spain."

From Spain! The word called up a wonderful vision of Moorish palaces, beautiful women, and gardens full of orange-trees. I questioned him eagerly, seeming to show, perhaps, more interest than I felt. He answered me shortly enough. William Gibson did not seem to care much about Spain, but even whilst he spoke took down and looked at a little drawing.

"You remember it," I said. "You gave me that thirteen years ago."

"Not thirteen," he said, quickly.

"Thirteen, wanting three months," I replied.

He put down the drawing, as if it turned him, and looked rather gloomy.

"Which do you prefer," I asked, in order to say something, "north or south?"

"I have not been in the north for many years," he answered.

"Yes," said I, perversely, "it is fifteen years since you went to Poland. I remember."

William Gibson looked at me very earnestly.

"It is on purpose," he said, "you say this to remind me that time has been hard upon me since you first came to live here, and yet I will not go without saying what I meant to say. Will you marry me?"

"Marry you?" I exclaimed, bewildered.

"Are you a widower, then?"

"Yes. I have been so for some time. "Did you not know it?"

I did not answer him. I could not. Alas! my dead love rising from its grave looked very pale and ghostlike. William Gibson gazed at me with evident sorrow.

"I ought to have known it," he said.

I did know it, and yet I would not lose my second chance.

"You want to marry again," I said, at length.

"Marry again!" he replied, impatiently. "I want to marry you!"

I shook my head.

"We are too old, both of us," I answered, after a while. "What would have been well years ago would not be well now. I could not make you happy, Mr. Gibson."

"You mean that you could not be happy with me," he replied, looking much mortified.

"Well, that may be—that may be."

I could not bear this. All prudence, all wisdom forsook me.

"As I liked you fifteen years ago, so I like you now," I exclaimed, from the fulness of my heart; "and if you think——"

"I don't think—I know," interrupted William Gibson, with a decision very unlike his former self; and thus, before I almost knew how, I was engaged to be his wife.

No April smile lit earth and sky as on the sad day of our parting. The night wind sighed around the cottage eaves, and the fire burned brightly on the hearth. And like the season and the hour, so were we. The vexing fever of passion was over with its delights and its torments, but warm and bright was what yet remained in our two hearts. The freshness of youth, the glow of manhood, were gone; but what matter! Enough love was left to give sweetness to the last years of two vexed lives.

Poets and painters never weary of sunsets, but late love is not a favoured theme. The sunset of life is not so fair to the outward eye as that of nature. What matter, I say again. William Gibson and I felt very happy, and for a week—a whole week—no cloud passed between us and that happiness.

As I came home from a pleasant ramble with him one afternoon, and entered Rosebower alone, I found a pale, haggard man sitting in my chair. I paused at the door, and looked in doubt at that dreary face. I looked and could not believe my eyes. Was this William—my William!

"Well, sister Anne," he said, "why do you look at me so? I have come back to you a broken, ruined man. You did much for me; you got me a noble inheritance, and I have lost it all—all—and here I am a burden on you once more; but not for long, Anne—not for long."

I threw my arms around his neck.

"You are my boy, my dear boy still!" I said, fondly.

I did not speak of his wife, nor did he

mention her name then or later; but I learned through another channel that when the crash in their fortunes came, she, forsaking the husband on whom her extravagance had helped to bring such sorrow, had gone to a distant relation's with her child.

It was sorrow, but not dishonour, thank Heaven. He had gone far, but stopped short of that. But it was ruin, deep, irremediable, and complete. Of that, the little he said soon convinced me. I felt so sure of it, that my course at once lay clear before me. My poor boy's health was shattered, his spirit was conquered, and, thanks to Ellen, his heart was broken. That dear burden I could bear, but I could never entail it on William Gibson!

So, whilst William sat shivering by the fire, I put on my hat and walked out along the road by which I knew Mr. Gibson was to come, and where, indeed, I had appointed to meet him. The November afternoon was calm and still, and the landscape very silent. There had been a sprinkling of snow in the morning, and it had not yet melted away from the trees and hedges; a grey sky, with here and there a faint patch of red caught from the setting sun, bent low over all.

"I, too, have reached my November season," I thought; "and what have I to do with hopes and desires that are only fit for young life in its spring? What should I think of trees and flowers that would want to give forth leaves and blossoms beneath this grey leaden sky! It is too late—for ever too late. I forgot it for a few days, and such forgetfulness was sweet whilst it lasted; but I remember it now, and can no longer delude myself or be deluded."

As I came to this conclusion Mr. Gibson appeared, and walked briskly towards me. My heart failed me a little. He seemed so happy! And as he came up to me and passed my arm within his, and looked at me, he seemed so sure of me—and why should I be ashamed to write it?—so glad to have me. I did not know how to begin; but he was quick to see that something ailed me. He questioned, and I replied. I told him how and why William had come back, and also the resolve I had taken.

He heard me out with more composure than I expected.

"That's Ellen's doing," he said; "I knew it would come to this, and told her so. Poor boy, and so she is not with him! Dragged him down the pit, then left him there."

"And now," I said, feeling he had not understood me, "you see and know, Mr. Gibson, why all that we had planned must be over. My boy has come back to me a child again, and again I am his mother, and—"

"You mean that you consider our engagement broken."

"It cannot be helped, Mr. Gibson."

"Then, Miss Sydney, you may as well prepare for an action for breach of promise. I shall certainly not submit to such treatment."

Tears rose to my eyes.

"I cannot—I cannot put that burden upon

you," I said, passionately; "I tell you he is ruined in purse, in mind, in body. I tell you that what remains to him of life is a wreck."

"Matters may not be so bad as you think," he replied, still speaking very composedly; "and, granting that they are, you have all the more need for help. And surely if any one is bound to assist the poor young fellow, Ellen's brother is the man."

"Mr. Gibson, if my boy hears that I am going to marry you—"

"Don't let him hear it," he interrupted, coolly; "do as he did; marry me first, and then tell him."

Here was a cool proposal from a shy man! But, you see, he was shy no longer. I told him so, and he shook his head, and replied that his shyness had cost him too dear not to be put by for ever, and again he proposed a speedy and secret marriage. At first, I was vehement in denial, then little by little I yielded, and began to think he might be right and I wrong. My poor boy had never much liked his brother-in-law, and was so accustomed to be everything to me, that if he learned that I was going to get married, he might just walk off and leave me in a pet. But if I was really married, he would submit to that which could not be undone; or, at all events, he need only learn the truth when it pleased me to tell it to him. I cannot say that I find these arguments very convincing now; then they were irresistibly clear and persuasive, and at their breath all my November theory melted away. So I stole out one morning and got married, a few miles off, and came back feeling very guilty.

"How long you have been away," said William, poking the fire very crossly.

I did not answer.

"Luckily, Mr. Gibson did not look in," he added, more good humouredly. "Why, how scared you look!"

Well might I look scared on hearing such a speech from my darling on my wedding-day.

"Why do you dislike Mr. Gibson?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't dislike him. He is a good-natured fellow, only I do not delight in his company. I care for none save yours, Sister Anne, and, what is more, I do not think I shall leave you again—if you will keep me," he added, drawing me to his side, and resting his head on my shoulder as he used to do when he was a child and felt tired.

I kissed him fondly, but did not dare to say one word.

"I have a fancy that we shall be very happy together," he resumed, more cheerfully; "I have not behaved well to you, and I know it now, though I never meant to be unkind. I thought then it could make no difference—I mean about my marriage; but I have lived to see the evils of concealment in such grave matters."

I had never felt more disconcerted in my life than when my dear boy spoke thus. Besides, this fancy of his to leave me no more, joined to his little relish for my poor husband's company,

distracted me. I do not know how I answered him, but it must have been very foolishly, for he laughed almost gaily, and said:

"Of course you love me, of course there is, there can be, no one as dear to you as your good-for-nothing William."

I had not said this, but I did not dare to contradict him. I felt greatly troubled, however, and confided my uneasiness to Mr. Gibson.

"Poor boy," he said, kindly, "we must not tell him yet. It would cut him up, but his plan of staying here is all nonsense. He would not like it long, nor should we. When his health mends he will think very differently of the future. In the mean while we must humour him. Eh, little lady?"

I am afraid little lady's heart was sad and heavy that day, for what was she to do between these two? Never so well as after I became his wife did I know the goodness of the man I had married. His gentleness, his patience, firmness, and good sense, did more to cure my poor boy's mind and body than all my love and my nursing. He roused him from his despair to a mood more manly. He showed him exertion to be both possible and desirable, and when we at length acknowledged our marriage to him, William, though he looked a little disconcerted, took it very well, and said to me:

"Well, it was natural, being so lonely, that you should wish for a companion; of course it was."

He spoke apologetically, as if willing to make every allowance for my weakness. He spoke, too, in profound, and I suppose natural, ignorance of my long love and wasted years. Ah! William, William, did it not occur to you that Sister Anne, too, had been young, and that she had had the hopes of youth, whilst you were still in your teens! I suppose the faded cheek could tell no tale of past blushes, and that there was no record of once happy dreams in her eyes!

"I hope you will be very happy," continued my brother, in the same tone; "I hope and believe it. Gibson is a thoroughly good fellow."

I was much nettled to hear my dear husband, the best and noblest of men, called a good fellow, but I must confess that his estimate of my brother was equally moderate.

"There is no harm in him," he said to me; "and now that he has had so severe a lesson, he will do very well."

You see, no man is a hero to his valet, and brothers-in-law are very rarely heroes to one another. It was decided that my brother, who

was now quite well again, should once more go to London, and try his fortunes there. To this I could have no objection, but there was an abruptness and a haste about his departure which pained me, and for which I could not help reproaching him when we parted at the station. He heard me without answering one word, but his first letter contained a long justification of his conduct. It was a very fond and foolish letter, and I could not help shedding a few tears as I read it.

"Little lady, little lady," said my husband, as he sat watching me across the breakfast-table, "I know what is passing in your mind. You are vexed with your boy because he left you rather suddenly, and, as you fancy, unkindly. You are clever, little lady, but not very deep. William went away so because the boy was jealous of me. Of course you love your brother, but of course you love your husband a good deal more. And when he saw that, he could not bear it. That is why he left us in such a hurry."

I could not help laughing in my husband's face, and I put my brother's letter in his hand, pointing to the following paragraph:

"Ever since I can remember, I have been a trouble to you, and I lately put a climax to my sins by making your poor good-natured husband jealous of me. Of course I know that Sister Anne will never love any man as she loves the boy she has reared and been a mother to, but of course, too, it was not pleasant for poor Mr. Gibson to see it, and the only return I could make for all his kindness to me—and it has been great—was to let him have his wife to himself."

My husband having read thus far, became very red, and gave me a shy, demure look of his grey eyes.

"Well," he said, bravely, "and which of the two do you love best, little lady?"

"Find it out," I replied—"find it out."

"Not I; I am sure of you. Find it out indeed!"

I could not help smiling through my tears as I heard him. I loved them both so much that each thought himself the most beloved.

I had a letter from my dear boy yesterday. He is doing very well again, he says, and Ellen is coming back to him. "She left with the shade, and returns with the sunshine," said her brother. I said nothing. Let her but make her husband happy—as happy, if she can, as her brother has made me. The past is a dream to Sister Anne now—a dream from which the sadness daily fades away in the calm joys of the present.

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